The Midsummer-Night's Dream

OBERON : "Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania"

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM *Act* II *Scene* I

Booklovers Edition

Midsummer Night's Dream

by

William Shakespeare

With Introductions, Notes, Glossary, Critical Comments, and Method of Study

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A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

Preface.

The Editions. Two Quarto editions of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* appeared in the year 1600:—

(i.) *A Midsummer-night's dreame. As it hath been sundry times publickely acted, by the Right honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his servants. Written by William Shakespeare. Imprinted at London, for Thomas Fisher, and are to be soulde at his shoppe, at the signe of the White Hart, in Fleetestreet.* 1600.

(ii.) An edition with the same title, bearing the name of '*Iames Roberts*' instead of '*Thomas Fisher.*'

These editions are styled respectively the First and Second Quartos; the Second was probably a pirated reprint of Fisher's, but the differences between them are unimportant, and though the First must be considered the authoritative text, both copies are remarkably accurate, when compared with other Quartos.

The First Folio version of the play was printed from the Second Quarto, with a few slight and unimportant changes, and with some careless errors.

The Date of Composition. The only positive piece of external evidence for the date of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is its mention by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, 1598. Various attempts have been made to fix the occasion for which the play was originally written. Lord Southampton's marriage with Elizabeth Vernon has been proposed by some, but this did not take place till 1598; others maintain that the occasion was the marriage of the Earl of Essex with Lady Frances Sidney, the widow of Sir Philip Sidney, in 1590; there is, however, absolutely

no authority for the statement, and the probabilities are strongly opposed to the supposition.

The most valuable internal indication of the date of composition is perhaps to be found in Act v. i. 52-55:—

> *The thrice three Muses mourning for the death*
> *Of Learning, late deceased in beggary.*
> This is some satire, keen and critical,
> Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

We have most likely in these lines a reference to the death of Robert Greene, '*utriusque Academiæ in Artibus Magister*,' the novelist and dramatist, whose *Groatsworth of Wit* contained his well-known attack on 'the onely Shake-scene in a country'; in this pamphlet Greene spoke as the very representative of 'Learning,' and sounded the alarm of the scholar-poets at the triumphs of the 'unlearned' players in general, and of one 'upstart crowe' in particular. Greene died in degraded beggary in the autumn of 1592. The phrase '*the thrice three Muses*' was in all likelihood suggested by Spenser's *Teares of the Muses* (published in 1591), in which the nine Muses severally bewail the neglect of scholars,—one of many similar laments to be found in Elizabethan literature (*cp. e.g.* the lines at the end of the first sestiad of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*). The words '*late deceas'd*' would, according to this interpretation, fix the date of composition at about 1592-3.

On the other hand, it is maintained that Titania's description of the disastrous state of the weather (II. i. 88-117) points directly to the wretched summer of the year 1594: various contemporary accounts have come down to us of that terrible year, all of them recalling Shakespeare's words:—

> 'A colder time in world was never seene:
> The skies do loure, the sun and moone wax dim;
> Summer scarce known, but that the leaves are greene.
> The winter's waste drives water ore the brim;
> Upon the land great flotes of wood may swim;'
> —Churchyard's *Charitie*, 1595.

[*cp.* Forman's *Diary* (1564-1602); Stowe's *Chronicle*,

under the year 1594; Dr. King's *Lectures upon Jonas delivered at Yorke in the year of our Lorde* 1594.]

The general characteristics of the play lead to nothing very definite as far as its date is concerned; the rhyme-test is obviously no criterion, for the comedy is intentionally lyrical; but the blank-verse, with its paucity of double-endings and general regularity, the carefully elaborated plan and symmetrical arrangement of the plot, the comparative absence of real characterisation, the many reminiscences of country life, the buoyancy of its tone, all these elements manifestly connect *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* with the group of early 'love plays,'—*Love's Labour's Lost, The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* and *The Comedy of Errors,* and it may reasonably be placed between this group and the play to which they all seem to serve as preparatory efforts, the love-tragedy of '*Romeo and Juliet*,'—*i.e.* about the years 1593-1595. In all probability it passed through various revisions before its appearance as we have it in the First Quarto.

The Sources. (i.) Shakespeare may well have evolved *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* from Chaucer's *Knight's Tale,** to which he is obviously indebted for many elements. The general framework of the play—viz., the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, must have been suggested by the Tale; but Shakespeare ingeniously opens the '*Dream*' before the marriage, so that this event may round off the whole play; Chaucer introduces us to the pair at their home-coming after the marriage. In the '*Tale*' we have Palamon and Arcite rivals for the hand of Emelië; in obedience to the symmetrical plan of Shakespeare's early plots, these give place to two pairs of lovers, with their more complex story of crossed love; Emelië in fact resolves herself into Helena and Hermia. They are indeed "two lovely berries moulded on one stem."

* Shakespeare's debt to Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* amounts to very little—a few names and allusions; to these attention is called in the notes.

The great gods of Olympus, who busy themselves so actively with the destinies of the lovers in the '*Tale,*' are represented in the '*Dream*' by their mediæval representatives, by Oberon, Titania, and their ministering sprites.

In the '*Tale,*' as in the '*Dream,*' we have the same allusions to the rites of May, and the same 'musical confusion of hounds and echo in conjunction.' Shakespeare has, however, wisely dispensed with the cumbersome machinery of the '*Tale*'—cumbersome from the theatrical point of view—viz., the dungeons, tournaments, etc. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* should be read in order to understand how weak a drama results from the actual dramatisation of Chaucer's story of Palamon and Arcite.*

The secret of the transformation of *The Knight's Tale* into *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* may perhaps be partially understood, if we consider the task that Shakespeare seems to have set himself,—the task of satisfying all the requirements of a 'Court drama' without departing from his own ideas of Romantic Comedy. The essential elements of such a play as Lyly's *Endymion,*—the spectacular machinery, the mythological agencies, the love-story, the comical interlude, the complimentary allusions to the Queen, direct or allegorical,—all these find a place in Shakespeare's *Dream.*

(ii.) Popular tradition, derived from Teutonic and Celtic paganism, together with quasi-classical and romantic lore, are the main sources of Shakespeare's fairy mythology.† Oberon, the fairy king, found a place in English

* I cannot bring myself to believe that there is a line of Shakespeare's in this unequal performance; it is specially interesting to note that the authors of the *Two Noble Kinsmen* must have known that the '*Dream*' represented Shakespeare's version of the '*Tale.*'

† N. B. 'Fairy' properly signifies merely 'enchantment,' or the state of being like a *fay*; *fée,* with its various cognates in other Romance languages is derived from a low Latin *fata,* 'a goddess of destiny,' really a plural of *fatum,* treated as a feminine singular. The application of this term to the 'elves' of Teutonic mythology is in itself instructive.

dramatic literature* before Shakespeare re-created him; he may be traced back to the Charlemagne romance of *Huon of Bordeaux,* translated from the French by Lord Berners about 1534 (*cp. Early English Text Society, Extra Series,* ed. S. Lee, Nos. 40, 41, 43, 50). 'Oberon,' in reality identical with the famous dwarf 'Alberich' of the *Nibelungen Lied,* dwells with all his fairy subjects in a forest on the way to Babylon, and the splendour of his equipment has a truly oriental colouring; similarly Shakespeare associates his 'fairy-land' with the East—'the farthest steep of India.'

'Titania' (taken from Ovid, Metam. IV. 346, where it is applied to Diana) illustrates the belief current at the time that the fairies were identical with the classical nymphs, and that Diana was their queen.† Titania's more popular title was 'Queen Mab.'

In Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale* the Fairy-King and Fairy-Queen are styled *Pluto* and *Proserpina*; possibly Shakespeare was indebted to Chaucer's *Tale* for the quarrel between Oberon and Titania, and for the Fairy-King's interest in a pair of mortals:—

> *'Pluto that is King of Faerië,*
> *And many a lady in his companië*
> *Following his wife, the Queen Proserpina . . . .*
> *Dame, quod this Pluto, be no longer wroth,*
> *I am king, it sit me not to lië.*
> *And I, quoth she, am Queen of Faërië,*
> *Let us no morë wordës of it make.'*

(It should be borne in mind that Spenser's *Faerie Queene* was published in 1590.)

The characteristics of 'Puck,' Oberon's jester, ('thou *lob* of spirits, *i.e.* clown,' II. 1-16) may all have been derived from popular tradition; the name was probably of Celtic origin, a generic term for 'sprite or goblin,' but it

* In Greene's *James IV.,* where he figures as 'Oboram, King of the Fayeries'; (*cp. The Fairy Queen,* Bk. ii., Cant. i., Sts. 6, 75).

† King James I. in his *Demonologie* points out that Diana was 'amongst us called the Phairee.'

is found in English before the Conquest, and very early in Scandinavian and other dialects. The mischief-loving sprite was generally known as '*Robin Goodfellow,*' in English, and '*Knecht Ruprecht*' in German. (On the Fairy-lore, *cp.* Halliwell's *Illustrations of the Fairy Mythology of Midsummer-Night's Dream,* Shakespeare Society Publication, 1845, where among other illustrative texts '*The Mad Pranks and Merry Jests of Robin Goodfellow*' (printed 1628) will be found *in extenso*; also Keightley's *Fairy Mythology; cp.* Jonson's Mask of *Oberon,* Drayton's *Nymphidia,* Milton's *L'Allegro,* 100-114).

(iii.) It is significant that in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale,* to which allusion has already been made, occur the following lines:—

> '*O noble Ovide, soth sayest thou, God wot,*
> *What sleight is it if love be long and hote,*
> *That he will find it out in some manere?*
> *By Pyramus and Thisbe may men lere;*
> *Though they were kept ful long and strict over all,*
> *They ben accorded, rowning through a wall,*' etc.*

Perhaps these lines suggested to Shakespeare the subject of his burlesque interlude, introduced into this play much in the same way as the 'Nine Worthies' in *Love's Labour's Lost.* Various poems, ballads, and perhaps mumming plays on the subject of Pyramus and Thisbe were probably known to Shakespeare, though his immediate source seems to have been Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* where the story is told (iv. 55-166).

A commonplace-book of the beginning of the seventeenth century belonging to the British Museum (Additional MSS. 15227) contains a short play entitled "*Tragœdia miserrima Pyrami et Thisbes Fata enuncians* [*Historia ex Publio Ovidio deprompta*] *Authore N.R.*" A

* Chaucer's *Legend of Thisbe of Babylon* was certainly read by Shakespeare, though its influence cannot be detected in the play.

few lines from these brief 'tedious' scenes will serve to show how easily the subject lends itself to burlesque:—

> *"What shall I doe? I know not what to doe.*
> *Where shall I runne, oh runne? I cannot goe.*
> *Where shall I goe, oh goe? I cannot stirre."*

Among Clement Robinson's *Handful of Pleasant Delights* (1584) there is *'A New Sonet of Pyramus and Thisbe,'* which occasionally reminds one of Shakespeare's parody.

[*"Narcissus, A Twelfe Night Merriment played by Youths of the Parish at the College of S. John the Baptist in Oxford, A.D.* 1602 (*ed. Margaret Lee; David Nutt,* 1893) is a similar burlesque of an Ovidian story.]

(iv.) 'Oberon's Vision'—the pivot of the play—contains without doubt a complimentary allusion to the Queen. Various explanations have been advanced of the whole passage (II. i. 148-168). In 1843 the Rev. N. J. Halpin published his *'Oberon's Vision in the Midsummer-Night's Dream, illustrated by a comparison with Lylie's Endymion'*—the most ingenious unravelling of this allegorical passage, which is said to refer to the Queen's visit to Kenilworth Castle in July, 1575; to the festivities on that occasion; to the ambitious attempts of Leicester (*'Cupid all arm'd,'* Lyly's *Endymion*) to win Elizabeth (*'the cold moon,'* Lyly's *Cynthia*); to his wavering passion for the Countess of Sheffield (*'the earth,'* Lyly's *Tellus*); and finally to his intrigue with Lettice, Countess of Essex (*'a little western flower,'* Lyly's *Floscula*).

Time of Action. The action of the play covers three days, or rather one long night preceded and followed by a day, although Theseus in his opening words tells Hippolyta *"Four happy days"* are to elapse before their nuptial hour. The eventful night of the second day occupies the greater part of the play—viz., Acts II., III., and IV. Sc. i. (ll. 1-142). The following morning is "the morn of May"; "the Dream" is really "a May-Night's Dream," but 'Midsummer Eve'—'St John's Night,' with its pagan Balefires—was especially associated with fairy

superstitions and fantastic riotings, and the title suggests little more than 'a very Midsummer madness.' It is not absolutely necessary, as some scholars maintain, to regard the play as actually written for performance 'on Midsummer-day at Night,' though such plays were occasionally composed (*e.g.* Ben Jonson's Fairy Masque '*The Satyr,*' which evidently owes much to Shakespeare).

The idea of a 'dream-drama' was perhaps suggested by Lyly's Prologue to his *Woman in the Moon,* written some ten years before Shakespeare's play:—

> *'Remember all is but a poet's dream,*
> *The first he had in Phœbus' holy bower,*
> *But not the last, unless the first displease.'*

But in employing 'the Dream' as a piece of poetical machinery Shakespeare links himself to his mediæval predecessors, whose conventional allegories knew no other medium than that made familiar to them by their favourite '*Romaunt,*'—a device derived by Lorris from the quaint dream-book to which Chaucer often refers, '*Scipionis Somnium,*' by 'an author hight Macrobes.'

"God turne us every dream to good!"

A Pensioner (II. i. 10) of the time of Elizabeth.

Critical Comments.

I.

Argument.

I. Theseus, Duke of Athens, after conquering the Amazons in battle, is in turn conquered by the charms of their queen, Hippolyta, and plights troth with her. To speed the time until their wedding night, he orders amusements to be put on foot. Actuated by a spirit of loyalty, Bottom the weaver and other tradesmen prepare a play for the Duke.

Egeus, an Athenian, brings his daughter Hermia and her two suitors before Theseus, praying him to command Hermia to wed Demetrius. Hermia pleads to be allowed to marry the one she loves—Lysander. The Duke orders her to obey her father under penalty of death or of a conventual life. Hermia and Lysander bewail the harsh decree, and secretly agree to meet in a wood near by and flee to another country. They tell their plans to Helena, a jilted sweetheart of Demetrius, and she, to win back his love, goes straightway to inform him of the design.

II. In the forest is great commotion among the fairies. King Oberon and Queen Titania are at odds. Oberon bids Puck procure a love-juice to pour upon Titania's eyelids when she is asleep, in order that she may love the first thing her waking eyes behold. Just then Oberon perceives Demetrius, who has sought out the trysting-place of Lysander and Hermia, only to meet Helena, much to his distaste. The lady's distress at her lover's coldness softens the heart of Oberon, who bids Puck touch Demetrius's eyes also with the love-juice, for Helena's sake, while he himself anoints the eyes of Ti-

tania. Meantime Lysander and Hermia arrive, and Puck in error anoints Lysander's instead of Demetrius's eyes; so that Lysander, happening to awake just as the neglected Helena wanders by, falls in love with her, to the abandonment of Hermia.

III. This same enchanted spot in the forest happens to be the place selected by Bottom the weaver and his companions for the final rehearsal of their play. The roguish Puck passes that way while they are rehearsing, and decides to take a hand in the proceedings. He crowns Bottom with an ass's head, whereupon the other players disperse terror-stricken. Then he brings Bottom to Titania, whose enchanted gaze fixes upon the human ass as her heart's love.

Meantime the four lovers come into great bewilderment. Oberon finds that Puck has anointed the eyes of Lysander instead of those of Demetrius, which he himself now takes occasion to touch. When Demetrius awakes he sees his neglected Helena being wooed by Lysander. His own love for her returns, and he is ready to fight Lysander. Helena deems them both to be mocking her; while Hermia is dazed by the turn of affairs. The fairies interpose and prevent conflict by causing the four to wander about until they are tired, when they fall asleep. Puck repairs his blunder by anointing Lysander's eyes, in order to dispel the illusion caused by the love-juice.

IV. Titania makes love to Bottom, till Oberon, whose anger has abated, removes the spell from her eyes. To Bottom is restored his natural form, and he rejoins his comrades in Athens. Theseus, on an early morning hunting-trip in the forest, discovers the four lovers. Explanations follow; the Duke relents and bestows Helena upon Demetrius and Hermia upon Lysander.

V. A wedding-feast for three couples instead of one only is spread in Duke Theseus's palace. Thither come Bottom's players to present the comic tragedy of " Pyr-

amus and Thisbe," which is performed in wondrous fashion. After the company retires for the night, the fairies dance through the corridors on a mission of blessing and good-will for the three wedded pairs.

McSPADDEN: *Shakespearian Synopses.*

II.

The Fairy World.

The fairy world becomes [in this play] as diversified as the natural, and we find degrees and orders among the flimsy population, from the robed and circleted Oberon and his Queen, the humorsome but observant Puck, the deft fairy mistress of robes and dewer of floral orbs, to the cloud of graceful dancers, and the small elves not disdainful of dapper jerkins from leather of rear-mice. The diminutiveness and delicacy ascribed to the quaint spirits are leading characteristics of the poetical ideal portrayed, and at the same time appear most difficult of dramatic rendering. Yet the poet appears to make no concession from consideration of the player; he rather insists, with recurring emphasis, on the tiny and airy essence of the beings he imagines, and demands that details as fragile and minute as those which, in mere license of unlimited description, are ascribed to Queen Mab's equipage in *Romeo and Juliet,* shall here be bodily set forth. Peasblossom, Cobweb, and their compeers, are as defined personalities as courtiers and gold sticks, lords in waiting, yeomen of the guard, and gentlemen pensioners ever can be. Answering to quaint names, but speaking little else, they execute sedulous and unquestioning, and with no sense of incongruity, all commands of their sovereign, and with equal zeal watch round "her close and consecrated bower," or scratch the ass's nowl of any anamorphosed fool who happens to be a royal favourite. Yet they attend and answer with the heart of elves not too big to find a full suit in a bat's

wing, but able-bodied for warfare singly against the red-hipped humble-bee, only wary withal of the bursting honey bag—or even, in phalanx, against the hooting owl with its broad wondering eyes, but scared when the voices of their sovereigns rise in domestic debate, and happy to dive, more than two together, into the depths of a concealing acorn cup. Delicately they can transfer and handle a dew-drop—a fairy ring on the grass affords space for a multitude of them—and for time, a minute requires micrometrical division—"Then for the third part of a minute hence"—for the apportionment of their most complicated undertakings.

Such, however, is the perfect harmony of imagery and allusion, that, while the fairies are alone on the stage, it might be easy for the eye to mistake the scale of the actors, with slight assistance of sex and age in the cast. Some aid may be gained by a moderated disproportion in the forest scenery, flowers, turf, mushrooms, etc., and the trunk of the "Duke's oak." Add to this careful attention to contrast the fairy costume with that of even the female characters of the play, to illuminate the stage sufficiently for the play of countenance to be discovered through the long night scenes, otherwise vexatious, and stage resources will have done all that is necessary, and the rest may be left to the force of the poetry, which will solicit, will exact, prompt acquiescence in all its postulates, and to the gradation of relief from the bewildered lovers to the amateur actors and their translated coryphæus.

LLOYD: *Critical Essays on the Plays of Shakespeare.*

III.

Effects of Contrast.

We can readily perceive why, in this work, the "rude mechanicals" and clowns, and the company of actors with their burlesque comedy, are placed in such

rude contrast to the tender and delicate play of the fairies. Prominence is given to both by the contrast afforded between the material and the aërial, between the awkward and the beautiful, between the utterly unimaginative and that which, itself fancy, is entirely woven out of fancy. The play acted by the clowns is, as it were, the reverse of the poet's own work, which demands all the spectator's reflective and imitative fancy to open to him this aërial world, whilst in the other nothing is left to the imagination of the spectator. The homely mechanics, who compose and act merely for gain, and for the sake of so many pence a day, the ignorant players, with hard hands and thick heads, whose unskilful art consists in learning their parts by heart, these men believe themselves obliged to represent Moon and Moonshine by name in order to render them evident; they supply the lack of side-scenes by persons, and all that should take place behind the scenes they explain by digressions. These rude doings are disturbed by the fairy chiefs with their utmost raillery, and the fantastical company of lovers mock at the performance.

GERVINUS: *Shakespeare Commentaries.*

IV.

Puck and His Pranks.

Puck is apt to remind one of Ariel, though they have little in common, save that both are supernatural, and therefore live no longer in the faith of reason. Puck is no such sweet-mannered, tender-hearted, music-breathing spirit, there are no such delicate interweavings of a sensitive moral soul in his nature, he has no such soft touches of compassion and pious awe of goodness, as link the dainty Ariel in so sweetly with our best sympathies. Though Goodfellow by name, his powers and aptitudes for mischief are quite unchecked by any gentle

relentings of fellow-feeling: in whatsoever distresses he finds or occasions he sees much to laugh at, nothing to pity: to tease and vex poor human sufferers, and then to think "what fools these mortals be," is pure fun to him; and if he do not cause pain, it is that the laws of Fairydom forbid him, not that he wishes it uncaused. Yet, notwithstanding his mad pranks, we cannot choose but love him, and let our fancy frolic with him, his sense of the ludicrous is so exquisite, he is so fond of sport, and so quaint and merry in his mischief, while at the same time such is the strange web of his nature as to keep him morally innocent. It would seem that some of the tricks once ascribed to him were afterwards transferred to witchcraft. Well do we remember a black spot in the bottom of the old churn over which we have toiled away many an autumnal evening. A red-hot horseshoe had been thrown in to disbewitch the cream, and had left its mark there. Report told how a certain old woman of the neighbourhood was fretting and groaning the next morning with a terrible burn. Of course she was burnt out of the churn, and, she away, the butter soon came.

HUDSON: *The Works of Shakespeare.*

V

Titania.

[Shakespeare's fairies] can make no direct inward impression upon mortals; their influence over the mind is not spiritual, but throughout material; it is effected by means of vision, metamorphosis, and imitation. Titania has no spiritual association with her friend, but mere delight in her beauty, her "swimming gait," and her powers of imitation. When she awakes from her vision there is no reflection. "Methought I was enamoured of an ass," she says—"O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!" She is only affected by the idea

of the actual and the visible. There is no scene of reconciliation with her husband; her resentment consists in separation, her reconciliation in a dance; there is no trace of reflection, no indication of feeling. Thus, to remind Puck of a past event no abstract date sufficed, but an accompanying indication, perceptible to the senses, was required. They are represented, these little gods, as natural souls, without the higher human capacities of mind, lords of a kingdom, not of reason and morality, but of imagination and ideas conveyed by the senses; and thus they are uniformly the vehicle of the fancy which produces the delusions of love and dreams. Their will, therefore, only extends to the corporeal. They lead a luxurious, merry life, given up to the pleasures of the senses; the secrets of nature and the powers of flowers and herbs are confided to them. To sleep in flowers, lulled with dances and songs, with the wings of painted butterflies to fan the moonbeams from their eyes, this is their pleasure; the gorgeous apparel of flowers and dewdrops is their joy. When Titania wishes to allure her beloved, she offers him honey, apricots, purple grapes, and dancing.

GERVINUS: *Shakespeare Commentaries.*

VI.

Bottom.

When Malvolio [in *Twelfth Night*] is trying to break up the midnight revel, the mischievous Maria fleers at him with, "Go shake your ears." That is a performance for which Malvolio is still too distant from his congener. But self-sufficiency succeeds in preserving that structure in Bottom, who is so deep and rich with harmless vanity that he sprouts into the auricular appendages, and he shakes them in the most amiable, frisky way through the Dream of a Midsummer Night. But there is nothing sour about Bottom; he has none of the quality which

Margaret Fuller was the first to call "aloofness." He is hale-fellow with all his mates who appreciate the small gifts which belong to him, and which he good-naturedly strives to render serviceable. Though he is a better fellow than Malvolio, he has all that precisian's ambition; for as the steward could be Olivia's husband as well as any other man—forsooth, why not?—so Bottom thinks he can play all the parts, rises to their glittering bait, and would appropriate the whole interlude. He is one of those self-made men who occasionally discredit their own bringing up and help us to recover our respect for a liberal education. Like the man of whom Sydney Smith said that he was ready at any moment to undertake the command of the Channel Fleet or run a factory, they have elbowed their way into a conviction that they can fill all the offices from constable to President in a style to astonish men of disciplined intelligence. And they frequently succeed in doing that. Men who unfortunately enjoyed early advantages, and whose lives have perhaps been a protracted training in the virtue as well as wit which lifts state-craft above gambling, have the proper kind of admiration for these chevaliers of industry. . . .

It is also a suggestion of the subtlest humor when Titania summons her fairies to wait upon Bottom; for the fact is that the soul's airy and nimble fancies are constantly detailed to serve the donkeyism of this world. "Be kind and courteous to this gentleman." Divine gifts stick musk-roses in his sleek, smooth head. The world is a peg that keeps all spiritual being tethered. James Watt agonizes to teach this *vis inertiæ* to drag itself by the car-load; Palissy starves for twenty years to enamel its platter; Franklin charms its house against thunder; Raphael contributes halos to glorify its ignorance of divinity; all the poets gather for its beguilement, hop in its walk and gambol before it, scratch its head, bring honey-bags, and light its farthing dip at glow-worms' eyes. Bottom's want of insight is circled round

by fulness of insight, his clumsiness by dexterity. In matter of eating, he really prefers provender: "good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow." But how shrewdly Bottom manages this holding of genius to his service! He knows how to send it to be oriented with the blossoms and the sweets, giving it the characteristic counsel not to fret itself too much in the action.

You see there is nothing sour and cynical about Bottom. His daily peck of oats, with plenty of munching-time, travels to the black cell where the drop of gall gets secreted into the ink of starving thinkers, and sings content to it on oaten straw. Bottom, full-ballasted, haltered to a brown-stone-fronted crib, with digestion always waiting upon appetite, tosses a tester to Shakspeare, who might, if the tradition be true, have held his horse in the purlieus of the Curtain or Rose Theatre: perhaps he sublet the holding while he slipped in to show Bottom how he is a deadly earnest fool; and the boxes crow and clap their unconsciousness of being put into the poet's celestial stocks. All this time Shakspeare is divinely restrained from bitterness by the serenity which overlooks a scene. If, like the ostrich, he had been only the largest of the birds which do not fly, he might have wrangled for his rations of ten-penny nails and leather, established perennial indigestion in literature, and furnished plumes to jackdaws. But he flew closest to the sun, and competed with the dawn for a first taste of its sweet and fresh impartiality.

WEISS: *Wit, Humor, and Shakspeare.*

VII.

Theseus.

The central figure of the play is that of Theseus. There is no figure in the early drama of Shakspere so magnificent. His are the large hands that have helped to shape the world. His utterance is the rich-toned speech of one who is master of events—who has never

known a shrill or eager feeling. His nuptial day is at hand; and while the other lovers are agitated, bewildered, incensed, Theseus, who does not think of himself as a lover, but rather as a beneficent conqueror, remains in calm possession of his joy. Theseus, a grand ideal figure, is to be studied as Shakspere's conception of the heroic man of action in his hour of enjoyment and of leisure. With a splendid capacity for enjoyment, gracious to all, ennobled by the glory, implied rather than explicit, of great foregone achievement, he stands as centre of the poem, giving their true proportions to the fairy tribe, upon the one hand, and, upon the other, to the "human mortals." The heroic men of action—Theseus, Henry V., Hector—are supremely admired by Shakspere. Yet it is observable that as the total Shakspere is superior to Romeo, the man given over to passion, and to Hamlet, the man given over to thought, so the Hamlet and the Romeo within him give Shakspere an infinite advantage over even the most heroic men of action. He admires these men of action supremely, but he admires them from an outside point of view. "These fellows of infinite tongue," says Henry, wooing the French princess, "that can rhyme themselves into ladies' favours, they do always reason themselves out again. What! a speaker is but a prater, a rhyme is but a ballad." It is into Theseus' mouth that Shakspere puts the words which class together "the lunatic, the lover, and the poet" as of imagination all compact. That is the touch which shows how Shakspere stood off from Theseus, did not identify himself with this grand ideal (which he admired so truly), and admitted to himself a secret superiority of his own soul over that of this noble master of the world.

Comments by Shakspere upon his own art are not so numerous that we can afford to overlook them. It must here be noted that Shakspere makes the "palpable gross" interlude of the Athenian mechanicals serve as an indirect apology for his own necessarily imperfect

attempt to represent fairy-land and the majestic world of heroic life. Maginn (*Shakspeare Papers*, p. 119) writes: "When Hippolyta speaks scornfully of the tragedy in which Bottom holds so conspicuous a part, Theseus answers that the best of this kind [scenic performances] are but shadows, and the worst no worse if imagination amend them. She answers [for Hippolyta has none of Theseus' indulgence towards inefficiency, but rather a woman's intolerance of the absurd] that it must be *your* imagination then, not *theirs*. He retorts with a joke on the vanity of actors, and the conversation is immediately changed. The meaning of the Duke is that, however we may laugh at the silliness of Bottom and his companions in their ridiculous play, the author labours under no more than the common calamity of dramatists. They are all but dealers in shadowy representations of life; and if the worst among them can set the mind of the spectator at work, he is equal to the best."

Maginn has missed the more important significance of the passage. Its dramatic appropriateness is the essential point to observe. To Theseus, the great man of action, the worst and the best of these shadowy representations are all one. He graciously lends himself to be amused, and will not give unmannerly rebuff to the painstaking craftsmen who have so laboriously done their best to please him. But Shakspere's mind by no means goes along with the utterance of Theseus in this instance any more than when he places in a single group the lover, the lunatic, and the poet. With one principle enounced by the Duke, however, Shakspere evidently does agree—namely, that it is the business of the dramatist to set the spectator's imagination to work; that the dramatist must rather appeal to the mind's eye than to the eye of sense; and that the co-operation of the spectator with the poet is necessary. For the method of Bottom and his company is precisely the reverse, as Gervinus has observed, of Shakspere's own method.

They are determined to leave nothing to be supplied by the imagination. Wall must be plastered; Moonshine must carry lantern and bush. And when Hippolyta, again becoming impatient of absurdity, exclaims, "I am aweary of this moon! would he would change!" Shakspere further insists on his piece of dramatic criticism by urging, through the Duke's mouth, the absolute necessity of the man in the moon being *within* his lantern. Shakspere as much as says, "If you do not approve my dramatic method of presenting fairy-land and the heroic world, here is a specimen of the rival method. You think my fairy-world might be amended. Well, amend it with your own imagination. I can do no more unless I adopt the artistic ideas of these Athenian handicraftsmen."

It is a delightful example of Shakspere's impartiality that he can represent Theseus with so much genuine enthusiasm. Mr. Matthew Arnold has named our aristocrats, with their hardy, efficient manners, their addiction to field sports, and their hatred of ideas, "the Barbarians." Theseus is a splendid and gracious aristocrat, perhaps not without a touch of the Barbarian in him. He would have found Hamlet a wholly unintelligible person, who, in possession of his own thoughts, could be contented in a nutshell.

DOWDEN: *Shakspere.*

VIII.

Appreciations of the Play.

We have here an element of aristocratic distinction in the princely couple, Theseus and Hippolyta, and their court. We have here an element of sprightly burlesque in the artisans' performance of Pyramus and Thisbe, treated with genial irony and divinely felicitous humour. And here, finally, we have the element of supernatural poetry, which soon after flashes forth again in *Romeo and Juliet*, where Mercutio describes the doings of Queen

Mab. Puck and Pease-blossom, Cobweb and Mustard-seed—pigmies who hunt the worms in a rosebud, tease bats, chase spiders, and lord it over nightingales—are the leading actors in an elfin play, a fairy carnival of inimitable mirth and melody, steeped in a midsummer atmosphere of mist-wreaths and flower-scents, under the afterglow that lingers through the sultry night. This miracle of happy inspiration contains the germs of innumerable romantic achievements in England, Germany, and Denmark, more than two centuries later.

BRANDES: *William Shakespeare.*

Of all his works, the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* leaves the strongest impression on my mind, that this miserable world must have, for once at least, contained a happy man. This play is so purely delicious, so little intermixed with the painful passions from which poetry distils her sterner sweets, so fragrant with hilarity, so bland and yet so bold, that I cannot imagine Shakspeare's mind to have been in any other frame than that of healthful ecstasy when the sparks of inspiration thrilled through his brain in composing it.

CAMPBELL.

Shakespeare's joy in the possession of the poetic gift, and his earliest delight in life, found radiant expression in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream,* a masterpiece of poetic fancy, and the gayest and most beautiful of poetic comedies. Rich as this drama is in humorous effects, it is so essentially lyrical in spirit that it stands alone in English poetry; an exquisite expansion of the masque or festival poem into a drama of pure fancy and daring imagination.

MABIE: *William Shakespeare: Poet, Dramatist, and Man.*

The *Midsummer-Night's Dream* is especially remarkable for its beauty as a composition. The theme throughout is treated with care as well as felicity. In structure,

in diction, in characterisation, and poetical elegance, it is, we may boldly say, faultless. Nor is it less fitted for the stage than for the closet. However it may be acted, whether as a ballet with a favourite cantatrice in the part of Oberon, or otherwise as a Scandinavian legend with the faery monarch properly bearded, its histrionic representation is always charming. Its execution is as exquisite as its conception is delicate.

HERAUD: *Shakspere, His Inner Life as Intimated in His Works.*

It is astonishing that Shakespear should be considered, not only by foreigners, but by many of our own critics, as a gloomy and heavy writer, who painted nothing but "gorgons and hydras, and chimæras dire." His subtlety exceeds that of all other dramatic writers, insomuch that a celebrated person of the present day said that he regarded him rather as a metaphysician than a poet. In the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* alone, we should imagine, there is more sweetness and beauty of description than in the whole range of French poetry put together. What we mean is this, that we will produce out of that single play ten passages to which we do not think any ten passages in the works of the French poets can be opposed displaying equal fancy and imagery. Shall we mention the remonstrance of Helena to Hermia, or Titania's description of her fairy train, or her disputes with Oberon about the Indian boy, or Puck's account of himself and his employments, or the Fairy Queen's exhortation to the elves to pay due attendance upon her favourite, Bottom; or Hippolyta's description of a chase, or Theseus' answer? The two last are as heroical and spirited as the others are full of luscious tenderness. The reading of the play is like wandering in a grove by moonlight; the descriptions breathe a sweetness like odours thrown from beds of flowers.

HAZLITT: *Characters of Shakespear's Plays.*

A Midsummer-Night's Dream.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

THESEUS, *Duke of Athens.*
EGEUS, *father to Hermia.*
LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, } *in love with Hermia.*
PHILOSTRATE, *master of the revels to Theseus.*
QUINCE, *a carpenter.*
SNUG, *a joiner.*
BOTTOM, *a weaver.*
FLUTE, *a bellows-mender.*
SNOUT, *a tinker.*
STARVELING, *a tailor.*

HIPPOLYTA, *queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.*
HERMIA, *daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander.*
HELENA, *in love with Demetrius.*

OBERON, *king of the fairies.*
TITANIA, *queen of the fairies.*
PUCK, *or Robin Goodfellow.*
PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARDSEED, } *fairies.*

Other fairies attending their King and Queen. Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

SCENE: *Athens, and a wood near it.*

A Midsummer-Night's Dream.

ACT FIRST.

Scene I.

Athens. The palace of Theseus.

Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate, and attendants.

The. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,
Like to a step-dame, or a dowager,
Long withering out a young man's revenue.
Hip. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night,
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.
The. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth:
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.
[*Exit Philostrate.*
Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love, doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph and with revelling.

Enter Egeus, Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius.

Ege. Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!

The. Thanks, good Egeus: what 's the news with thee?

Ege. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth, Lysander: and, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child:
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love-tokens with my child:
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
With feigning voice, verses of feigning love;
And stolen the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers
Of strong prevailment in unharden'd youth:
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart;
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your Grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her:
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

The. What say you, Hermia? be advised, fair maid:
To you your father should be as a god;
One that composed your beauties; yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax

By him imprinted and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Her. So is Lysander.

The. In himself he is;
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
The other must be held the worthier.

Her. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

The. Rather your eyes must with his judgement look.

Her. I do entreat your Grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold.
Nor how it may concern my modesty,
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts;
But I beseech your Grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

The. Either to die the death, or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun;
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

Her. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up

Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

The. Take time to pause; and, by the next new moon,—
The sealing-day betwixt my love and me,
For everlasting bond of fellowship,—
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;
Or on Diana's altar to protest
For aye austerity and single life.

Dem. Relent, sweet Hermia: and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazed title to my certain right.

Lys. You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.

Ege. Scornful Lysander! true he hath my love,
And what is mine my love shall render him.
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius.

Lys. I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
As well possess'd; my love is more than his;
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
If not with vantage, as Demetrius';
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia:
Why should not I then prosecute my right?
Demetrius, I 'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

The. I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof;

But, being over-full of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it. But, Demetrius, come;
And come, Egeus; you shall go with me,
I have some private schooling for you both.
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will;
Or else the law of Athens yields you up,—
Which by no means we may extenuate,—
To death, or to a vow of single life.
Come, my Hippolyta: what cheer, my love?
Demetrius and Egeus, go along:
I must employ you in some business
Against our nuptial, and confer with you'
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

Ege. With duty and desire we follow you.

[*Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.*

Lys. How now, my love! why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

Her. Belike for want of rain, which I could well
Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes.

Lys. Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth;
But, either it was different in blood,—

Her. O cross! too high to be enthrall'd to low.

Lys. Or else misgraffed in respect of years,—

Her. O spite! too old to be engaged to young.

Lys. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends,—

Her. O hell! to choose love by another's eyes.

Lys. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentany as a sound,

Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold!'
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to confusion.

Her. If then true lovers have been ever cross'd,
It stands as an edict in destiny:
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.

Lys. A good persuasion: therefore, hear me, Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great revenue, and she hath no child:
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
And she respects me as her only son.
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me, then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;
And in the wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee.

Her. My good Lysander!
I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head,
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,
When the false Troyan under sail was seen,

By all the vows that ever men have broke,
In number more than ever women spoke,
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.
Lys. Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

Enter Helena.

Her. God speed fair Helena! whither away?
Hel. Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!
Your eyes are lode-stars; and your tongue's sweet air
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,
The rest I 'ld give to be to you translated.
O, teach me how you look; and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart!
Her. I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.
Hel. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!
Her. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.
Hel. O that my prayers could such affection move!
Her. The more I hate, the more he follows me.
Hel. The more I love, the more he hateth me.
Her. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.
Hel. None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!
Her. Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;
Lysander and myself will fly this place.
Before the time I did Lysander see,

Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me:
O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell!

Lys. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:
To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold
Her silver visage in the watery glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

Her. And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,
There my Lysander and myself shall meet;
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,
To seek new friends and stranger companies.
Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us;
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!
Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

Lys. I will, my Hermia. [*Exit Herm.*
Helena, adieu:
As you on him, Demetrius dote on you! [*Exit.*

Hel. How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know:
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities:
Things base and vile, holding no quantity
Love can transpose to form and dignity:
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:

Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;
Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste:
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjured everywhere:
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again. [*Exit.*

Scene II.

The same. Quince's house.

Enter Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.

Quin. Is all our company here?

Bot. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

Quin. Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at night.

Bot. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on; then read the names of the actors; and so grow to a point.

Quin. Marry, our play is, The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.

Bot. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

Quin. Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bot. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quin. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bot. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Quin. A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

Bot. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole in some measure. To the rest: yet my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.

The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison-gates;
And Phibbus' car
Shall shine from far,
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.

This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players. This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover is more condoling.

Quin. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

Flu. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

Flu. What is Thisby? a wandering knight.

Quin. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flu. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a beard coming.

Quin. That 's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

Bot. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too, I 'll speak in a monstrous little voice, 'Thisne, Thisne;' 'Ah Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!'

Quin. No, no; you must play Pyramus: and, Flute, you Thisby.

Bot. Well, proceed.

Quin. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

Star. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisby's father: Snug, the joiner; you, the lion's part: and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

Snug. Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

Quin. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bot. Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, 'Let him roar again, let him roar again.'

Quin. An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that

they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

All. That would hang us, every mother's son.

Bot. I grant you, friends, if you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

Quin. You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely, gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

Bot. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quin. Why, what you will.

Bot. I will discharge it in either your straw colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French crown colour beard, your perfect yellow.

Quin. Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced. But, masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the mean time I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

Bot. We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect: adieu.
Quin. At the duke's oak we meet.
Bot. Enough; hold or cut bow-strings. [*Exeunt.*

ACT SECOND.

Scene I.

A wood near Athens.

Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy, and Puck.

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?
Fai. Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be:
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours:
I must go seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I 'll be gone:
Our queen and all her elves come here anon.
Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-night:
Take heed the queen come not within his sight;
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,

Because that she as her attendant hath
A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king;
She never had so sweet a changeling:
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.
And now they never meet in grove or green,
By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,
But they do square, that all their elves for fear
Creep into acorn cups and hide them there.

Fai. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are not you he?

Puck. Thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal:
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,

Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough;
And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh;
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But, room, fairy? here comes Oberon.

Fai. And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

Enter, from one side, Oberon, with his train; from the other, Titania, with hers.

Obe. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.
Tita. What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence:
I have forsworn his bed and company.
Obe. Tarry, rash wanton: am not I thy lord?
Tita. Then I must be thy lady: but I know
When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest steppe of India?
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.
Obe. How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished?
And make him with fair Ægle break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa?

Tita. These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land,
Have every pelting river made so proud,
That they have overborne their continents:
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat; and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard:
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud;
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,
For lack of tread, are undistinguishable:
The human mortals want their winter here;
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter, change

Their wonted liveries; and the mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which:
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

Obe. Do you amend it, then; it lies in you:
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.

Tita. Set your heart at rest:
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votaress of my order:
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side;
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood;
When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following,—her womb then rich with my young squire,—
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
And for her sake I will not part with him.

Obe. How long within this wood intend you stay?

Tita. Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.
If you will patiently dance in our round,
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

Obe. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

Tita. Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.
[*Exit Titania with her train.*

Obe. Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song.
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music.

Puck. I remember.

Obe. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts:
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower; the herb I shew'd thee once:
The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.

Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

Puck. I 'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes. [*Exit.*

Obe. Having once this juice,
I 'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she waking looks upon,
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
She shall pursue it with the soul of love:
And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
As I can take it with another herb,
I 'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible;
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter Demetrius, Helena following him.

Dem. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I 'll slay, the other slayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stolen unto this wood;
And here am I, and wode within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

Hel. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant;
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

Dem. Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you, I do not nor I cannot love you?

Hel. And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love,—
And yet a place of high respect with me,—
Than to be used as you use your dog?

Dem. Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit;
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

Hel. And I am sick when I look not on you.

Dem. You do impeach your modesty too much,
To leave the city, and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not;
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.

Hel. Your virtue is my privilege: for that
It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night;
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my respect are all the world:
Then how can it be said I am alone,
When all the world is here to look on me?

Dem. I 'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

Hel. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will, the story shall be changed:
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger; bootless speed,

When cowardice pursues, and valour flies.

Dem. I will not stay thy questions; let me go:
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

Hel. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex:
We cannot fight for love, as men may do;
We should be woo'd, and were not made to woo.
[*Exit Dem.*
I 'll follow thee, and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well. [*Exit.*

Obe. Fare thee well, nymph: ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love.

Re-enter Puck.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

Puck. Ay, there it is.

Obe. I pray thee, give it me.
I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows;
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:
And with the juice of this I 'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;

But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady: thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love:
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.

[*Exeunt.*

Scene II.

Another part of the wood.

Enter Titania, with her train.

Tita. Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;
Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds;
Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats; and some keep back
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots and wonders
At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;
Then to your offices, and let me rest.

SONG.

Fir. Fairy. You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen; 10
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,
Come not near our fairy queen.

CHORUS.

Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby:
Never harm,
Nor spell, nor charm,

Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby.

Fir. Fairy. Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

CHORUS.

Philomel, with melody, &c.

Sec. Fairy. Hence, away! now all is well:
One aloof stand sentinel.
[*Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.*

Enter Oberon, and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.

Obe. What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true-love take;
Love and languish for his sake:
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wakest, it is thy dear:
Wake when some vile thing is near. [*Exit.*

Enter Lysander and Hermia.

Lys. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood;
And to speak troth, I have forgot our way:
We 'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.
Her. Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;
For I upon this bank will rest my head.
Lys. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

Her. Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,
Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

Lys. O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.
I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit,
So that but one heart we can make of it:
Two bosoms interchained with an oath;
So then two bosoms and a single troth.
Then by your side no bed-room me deny;
For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

Her. Lysander riddles very prettily:
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
Lie further off; in human modesty,
Such separation as may well be said
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend:
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

Lys. Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I;
And then end life when I end loyalty!
Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest!

Her. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd!

[*They sleep.*

Enter Puck.

Puck. Through the forest have I gone,
But Athenian found I none,
On whose eyes I might approve
This flower's force in stirring love.
Night and silence.—Who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear:

This is he, my master said,
Despised the Athenian maid;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground.
Pretty soul! she durst not lie
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.
When thou wakest, let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid:
So awake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon. [*Exit.*

Enter Demetrius and Helena, running.

Hel. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

Dem. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

Hel. O, wilt thou darkling leave me? do not so.

Dem. Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go. [*Exit.*

Hel. O, I am out of breath in this fond chase:
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;
For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:
If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.
No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;
For beasts that meet me run away for fear:
Therefore no marvel though Demetrius
Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.
What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?
But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!
Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

Lys. [*Awaking*] And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.
Transparent Helena! Nature shews art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

Hel. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

Lys. Content with Hermia! No; I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia but Helena I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason sway'd
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season:
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will,
And leads me to your eyes; where I o'erlook
Love's stories, written in Love's richest book.

Hel. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man,
That I did never, no, nor never can,
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
But you must flout my insufficiency?
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,
In such disdainful manner me to woo.

But fare you well: perforce I must confess
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
O, that a lady, of one man refused,
Should of another therefore be abused! [*Exit.*

Lys. She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there:
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!
For as a surfeit of the sweetest things
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,
Or as the heresies that men do leave
Are hated most of those they did deceive,
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,
Of all be hated, but the most of me!
And, all my powers, address your love and might
To honour Helen and to be her knight! [*Exit.*

Her. [*Awaking*] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!
Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here!
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear:
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.
Lysander! what, removed? Lysander! lord!
What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?
Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear;
Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.
No? then I well perceive you are not nigh:
Either death or you I 'll find immediately. [*Exit.*

ACT THIRD.

Scene I.

The wood. Titania lying asleep.

Enter Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.

Bot. Are we all met?

Quin. Pat, pat; and here 's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.

Bot. Peter Quince,—

Quin. What sayest thou, Bully Bottom?

Bot. There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?

Snout. By 'r lakin, a parlous fear.

Star. I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

Bot. Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.

Quin. Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.

Bot. No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

Star. I fear it, I promise you.

Bot. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in,—God shield us!—a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to 't.

Snout. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bot. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,—'Ladies,'—or, 'Fair ladies, —I would wish you,'—or, 'I would request you,' —or, 'I would entreat you,—not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are:' and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly, he is Snug the joiner.

Quin. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

Snout. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bot. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quin. Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bot. Why, then may you leave a casement of the

great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement.

Quin. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Snout. You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

Bot. Some man or other must present wall: and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

Quin. If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake: and so every one according to his cue.

Enter Puck behind.

Puck. What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?
What, a play toward! I 'll be an auditor;
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause.

Quin. Speak, Pyramus. Thisby, stand forth.

Bot. Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet,—

Quin. Odours, odours.

Bot. ——odours savours sweet:
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.

But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,
And by and by I will to thee appear. [*Exit.*

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here. [*Exit.*

Flu. Must I speak now?

Quin. Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flu. Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier.
Most brisky juvenal, and eke most lovely Jew,
As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire,
I 'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

Quin. 'Ninus' tomb,' man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, cues and all. Pyramus enter: your cue is past; it is 'never tire.'

Flu. O,—As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.

Re-enter Puck, and Bottom with an ass's head

Bot. If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.

Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted.
Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!
[*Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.*

Puck. I 'll follow you, I 'll lead you about a round,
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier;
Sometime a horse I 'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire:

And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. [*Exit.*

Bot. Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard.

Re-enter Snout.

Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

Bot. What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? [*Exit Snout.*

Re-enter Quince.

Quin. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated. [*Exit.*

Bot. I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. [*Sings.*

The ousel cock so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill;

Tita. [*Awaking*] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Bot. [*Sings*]

The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay;—

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry 'cuckoo' never so?

Tita. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

Bot. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days; the more the pity, that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

Tita. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bot. Not so, neither: but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

Tita. Out of this wood do not desire to go:
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate:
The summer still doth tend upon my state;
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me;
I 'll give thee fairies to attend on thee;
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing, while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.
Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed!

Enter Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed.

First Fai. Ready.

Sec. Fai. And I.

Third Fai. And I.

Fourth Fai. And I.

All. Where shall we go?

Tita. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

First Fai. Hail, mortal!

Sec. Fai. Hail!

Third Fai. Hail!

Fourth Fai. Hail!

Bot. I cry your worships mercy, heartily: I beseech your worship's name.

Cob. Cobweb.

Bot. I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you. Your name, honest gentleman?

Peas. Peaseblossom.

Bot. I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir?

Mus. Mustardseed.

Bot. Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house: I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire your more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

Tita. Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.
The moon methinks looks with a watery eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.

[*Exeunt.*

Scene II.

Another part of the wood.

Enter Oberon.

Obe. I wonder if Titania be awaked;
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity.

Enter Puck.

Here comes my messenger.
How now, mad spirit!
What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
Were met together to rehearse a play,
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.

The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented, in their sport
Forsook his scene, and enter'd in a brake:
When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's nole I fixed on his head:
Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;
He murder cries, and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there;
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania waked, and straightway loved an ass.

Obe. This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes
With a love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

Puck. I took him sleeping,—that is finish'd too,—
And the Athenian woman by his side;
That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

Enter Hermia and Demetrius.

Obe. Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

Puck. This is the woman, but not this the man.

Dem. O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

Her. Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.
The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me: would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I 'll believe as soon
This whole earth may be bored, and that the moon
May through the centre creep, and so displease
Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

Dem. So should the murder'd look; and so should I,
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty:
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

Her. What 's this to my Lysander? where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

Dem. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

Her. Out, dog! out, cur! thou drivest me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?
Henceforth be never number'd among men!
O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake!
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch!
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

Dem. You spend your passion on a misprised mood:
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

Her. I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

Dem. An if I could, what should I get therefore?

Her. A privilege, never to see me more.
And from thy hated presence part I so:
See me no more, whether he be dead or no. [*Exit.*

Dem. There is no following her in this fierce vein:
Here therefore for a while I will remain.
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe;
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his tender here I make some stay.
[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Obe. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite,
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
Some true love turn'd, and not a false turn'd true.

Puck. Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

Obe. About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find:
All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,
With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear:
By some illusion see thou bring her here:
I 'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go; look how I go,
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. [*Exit.*

Obe. Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,

Sink in apple of his eye
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wakest, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Re-enter Puck.

Puck. Captain of our fairy band
Helena is here at hand;
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!
Obe. Stand aside: the noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.
Puck. Then will two at once woo one;
That must needs be sport alone:
And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously.

Enter Lysander and Helena.

Lys. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears:
Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true?
Hel. You do advance your cunning more and more.
When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:

Your vows to her and me put in two scales,
Will even weigh; and both as light as tales.

Lys. I had no judgement when to her I swore.

Hel. Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

Lys. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

Dem. [*Awaking*] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

Hel. O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment:
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia;
And now both rivals, to mock Helena;
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! none of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin, and extort
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

Lys. You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;
For you love Hermia; this you know I know:

And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love, and will do till my death.

Hel. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

Dem. Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none:
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,
And now to Helen is it home return'd,
There to remain.

Lys. Helen, it is not so.

Dem. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear.
Look, where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

Re-enter Hermia.

Her. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompence.
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

Lys. Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?

Her. What love could press Lysander from my side?

Lys. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
Why seek 'st thou me? could not this make thee know,
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

Her. You speak not as you think: it cannot be.

Hel. Lo, she is one of this confederacy!

Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.
Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
To bait me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—O, is all forgot?
All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key;
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition;
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;
So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.
And will you rent our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

Her. I am amazed at your passionate words.
I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

Hel. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face?
And made your other love, Demetrius,

Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most, to love unloved?
This you should pity rather than despise.

Her. I understand not what you mean by this.

Hel. Ay, do, persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back;
Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up:
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well: 'tis partly my own fault;
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

Lys. Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse:
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

Hel. O excellent!

Her. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Dem. If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

Lys. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat:
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.
Helen, I love thee; by my life, I do:
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

Dem. I say I love thee more than he can do.

Lys. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.
Dem. Quick, come!
Her. Lysander, whereto tends all this?
Lys. Away, you Ethiope!
Dem. No, no; he 'll [stay].
Seem to break loose; take on as you would follow,
But yet come not: you are a tame man, go!
Lys. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!
Her. Why are you grown so rude? what change is this?
Sweet love,—
Lys. Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!
Her. Do you not jest?
Hel. Yes, sooth; and so do you.
Lys. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.
Dem. I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you: I 'll not trust your word.
Lys. What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I 'll not harm her so.
Her. What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!
Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me:
Why, then you left me,—O, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?
Lys. Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;
Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee, and love Helena.

Her. O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stolen my love's heart from him?
Hel. Fine, i' faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!
Her. Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urged her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I! I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.
Hel. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me: I was never curst;
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.
Her. Lower! hark, again.
Hel. Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;

But he hath chid me hence, and threaten'd me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back,
And follow you no further: let me go:
You see how simple and how fond I am.

Her. Why, get you gone: who is 't that hinders you?

Hel. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

Her. What, with Lysander?

Hel. With Demetrius.

Lys. Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

Dem. No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

Hel. O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
She was a vixen when she went to school;
And though she be but little, she is fierce.

Her. Little again! nothing but low and little!
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.

Lys. Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
You bead, you acorn.

Dem. You are too officious
In her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone: speak not of Helena;
Take not her part; for, if thou dost intend
Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.

Lys. Now she holds me not;
Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

Dem. Follow! nay, I 'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

[*Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.*

Her. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you
Nay, go not back.
Hel. I will not trust you, I
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray.
My legs are longer though, to run away. [*Exit.*
Her. I am amazed, and know not what to say. [*Exit.*
Obe. This is thy negligence: still thou mistakest,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.
Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise,
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes;
And so far am I glad it so did sort,
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.
Obe. Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight:
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog, as black as Acheron;
And lead these testy rivals so astray,
As one come not within another's way.
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius;
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep:
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye;
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
To take from thence all error with his might,
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.

When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision;
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
With league whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I 'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;
And then I will her charmed eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger;
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone;
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light,
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

Obe. But we are spirits of another sort:
I with the morning's love have oft made sport;
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:
We may effect this business yet ere day. [*Exit.*

Puck. Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down:
I am fear'd in field and town:
Goblin, lead them up and down.
Here comes one.

Re-enter Lysander.

Lys. Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.
Puck. Here, villain; drawn and ready. Where art thou?
Lys. I will be with thee straight.
Puck. Follow me, then,
To plainer ground.
[*Exit Lysander, as following the voice.*

Re-enter Demetrius.

Dem. Lysander! speak again:
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?
Puck. Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come? Come, recreant; come, thou child;
I 'll whip thee with a rod; he is defiled
That draws a sword on thee.
Dem. Yea, are thou there?
Puck. Follow my voice: we 'll try no manhood here.
[*Exeunt.*

Re-enter Lysander.

Lys. He goes before me and still dares me on:
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I:
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly;
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] Come, thou gentle day!
For if but once thou show me thy grey light,
I 'll find Demetrius, and revenge this spite. [*Sleeps.*

Re-enter Puck and Demetrius.

Puck. Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why comest thou not?
Dem. Abide me, if thou darest; for well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And darest not stand, nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?
Puck. Come hither: I am here.
Dem. Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear,
If ever I thy face by daylight see:
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed.
By day's approach look to be visited.
[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Re-enter Helena.

Hel. O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate thy hours! Shine comforts from the east.
That I may back to Athens by daylight,
From these that my poor company detest:
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me awhile from mine own company.
[*Lies down and sleeps.*
Puck. Yet but three? Come one more;
Two of both kinds makes up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad:
Cupid is a knavish lad,
Thus to make poor females mad.

Re-enter Hermia.

Her. Never so weary, never so in woe;
Bedabbled with the dew, and torn with briers;

I can no further crawl, no further go;
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
Here will I rest me till the break of day.
Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!
[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Puck. On the ground
Sleep sound:
I 'll apply
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy.
[*Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eye.*
When thou wakest,
Thou takest
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye:
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown:
Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well. [*Exit.*

ACT FOURTH.

Scene I.

The same.

Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia, lying asleep.

Enter Titania and Bottom; Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed, and other Fairies attending; Oberon behind unseen.

Tita. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

Bot. Where 's Peaseblossom?

Peas. Ready.

Bot. Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where 's Mounsieur Cobweb?

Cob. Ready.

Bot. Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get you your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and, good mounsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, mounsieur; and, good mounsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; I would be loath to have you overflown with a honey-bag, signior. Where 's Mounsieur Mustardseed?

Mus. Ready.

Bot. Give me your neaf, Mounsieur Mustardseed. Pray you, leave your courtesy, good mounsieur.

Mus. What 's your will?

Bot. Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

Tita. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bot. I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let 's have the tongs and the bones.

Tita. Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

Bot. Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

Tita. I have a venturous fairy that shall seek
The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts.

Bot. I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas.
But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me:
I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

Tita. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away.
[*Exeunt Fairies.*
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!
[*They sleep.*

Enter Puck.

Obe. [*Advancing*] Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight?

Her dotage now I do begin to pity:
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her, and fall out with her;
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell, like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes,
Like tears, that did their own disgrace bewail.
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,
And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child;
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.
And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes:
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain;
That, he awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair,
And think no more of this night's accidents,
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.
Be as thou wast wont to be;
See as thou wast wont to see:
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
Hath such force and blessed power.
Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen.

Tita. My Oberon! what visions have I seen!
Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

Obe. There lies your love.

Tita. How came these things to pass?
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

Obe. Silence awhile. Robin, take off this head.
Titania, music call; and strike more dead
Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

Tita. Music, ho! music, such as charmeth sleep!
[*Music, still.*

Puck. Now, when thou wakest, with thine own fool's eyes peep.

Obe. Sound music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.
Now thou and I are new in amity,
And will to-morrow midnight solemnly
Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,
And bless it to all fair prosperity:
There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

Puck. Fairy king, attend, and mark:
I do hear the morning lark.

Obe. Then, my queen, in silence sad,
Trip we after night's shade:
We the globe can compass soon,
Swifter than the wandering moon.

Tita. Come, my lord; and in our flight,
Tell me how it came this night,
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground. [*Exeunt.*
[*Horns winded within.*

Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and train.

The. Go, one of you, find out the forester;

For now our observation is perform'd;
And since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.
Uncouple in the western valley; let them go:
Dispatch, I say, and find the forester.
[*Exit an Attend.*
We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

Hip. I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear
With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear
Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry: I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

The. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded; and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tuneable
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:
Judge when you hear. But, soft! what nymphs are these?

Ege. My lord, this is my daughter here asleep;
And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is;
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena:
I wonder of their being here together.

The. No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May; and, hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity.

But speak, Egeus; is not this the day
That Hermia should give answer of her choice?

Ege. It is, my lord.

The. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

[*Horns and shout within. Lys., Dem., Hel., and Her., wake and start up.*

Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past:
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?

Lys. Pardon, my lord.

The. I pray you all, stand up.
I know you two are rival enemies:
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy,
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

Lys. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
Half sleep, half waking: but as yet, I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here;
But, as I think,—for truly would I speak,
And now I do bethink me, so it is,—
I came with Hermia hither: our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
Without the peril of the Athenian law.

Ege. Enough, enough, my lord; you have enough:
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.
They would have stolen away; they would, Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me,
You of your wife and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

Dem. My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood;
And I in fury hither follow'd them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.

But, my good lord, I wot not by what power,—
But by some power it is,—my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud,
Which in my childhood I did dote upon;
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia:
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food;
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

The. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met:
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.
Egeus, I will overbear your will;
For in the temple, by and by, with us
These couples shall eternally be knit:
And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.
Away with us to Athens! three and three,
We 'll hold a feast in great solemnity.
Come, Hippolyta.

[*Exeunt The., Hip., Ege., and train.*

Dem. These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

Her. Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
When every thing seems double.

Hel. So methinks:
And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.

Dem. Are you sure

That we are awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
The Duke was here, and bid us follow him?
Her. Yea; and my father.
Hel. And Hippolyta.
Lys. And he did bid us follow to the temple.
Dem. Why, then, we are awake: let 's follow him;
And by the way let us recount our dreams. [*Exeunt.*

Bot. [*Awaking*] When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is, 'Most fair Pyramus.' Heigh-ho! Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God 's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the Duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death. [*Exit.*

Scene II.

Athens. Quince's house.

Enter Quince, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.

Quin. Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

Star. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.

Flu. If he come not, then the play is marred: it goes not forward, doth it?

Quin. It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

Flu. No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

Quin. Yea, and the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flu. You must say 'paragon': a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

Enter Snug.

Snug. Masters, the Duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married: if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

Flu. O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life; he could not have scaped sixpence a day: an the Duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I 'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

Enter Bottom.

Bot. Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

Quin. Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

Bot. Masters, I am to discourse wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out.

Quin. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

Bot. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the Duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go, away! [*Exeunt.*

ACT FIFTH.

Scene I.

Athens. The palace of Theseus.

Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate, Lords, and Attendants.

Hip. 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

The. More strange than true: I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,

Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

Hip. But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancy's images,
And grows to something of great constancy;
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

The. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

Enter Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena.

Joy, gentle friends! joy and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!

Lys. More than to us
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

The. Come now; what masques, what dances shall we have,

To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after-supper and bed-time?
Where is our usual manager of mirth?
What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate.

Phil. Here, mighty Theseus.

The. Say, what abridgement have you for this evening?
What masque? what music? How shall we beguile
The lazy time, if not with some delight?

Phil. There is a brief how many sports are ripe:
Make choice of which your highness will see first.
[*Giving a paper.*

The. [*Reads*] The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.
We 'll none of that: that have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.
[*Reads*] The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.
That is an old device; and it was play'd
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.
[*Reads*] The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary.
That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.
[*Reads*] A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth.
Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!
That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.
How shall we find the concord of this discord?

Phil. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,

Which is as brief as I have known a play;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious; for in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted:
And tragical, my noble lord, it is;
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself,
Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

The. What are they that do play it?

Phil. Hard-handed men, that work in Athens here,
Which never labour'd in their minds till now;
And now have toil'd their unbreathed memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.

The. And we will hear it.

Phil. No, my noble lord;
It is not for you: I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world;
Unless you can find sport in their intents,
Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain,
To do you service.

The. I will hear that play;
For never anything can be amiss,
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in: and take your places, ladies.

[*Exit Philostrate.*

Hip. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged,
And duty in his service perishing.

The. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

Hip. He says they can do nothing in this kind.

The. The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake:

And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit.
Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes;
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practised accent in their fears,
And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome;
And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity.

Re-enter Philostrate.

Phil. So please your Grace, the Prologue is address'd.
The. Let him approach. [*Flourish of trumpets.*

Enter Quince for the Prologue.

Pro. If we offend, it is with our good will.
That you should think, we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,
That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider, then, we come but in despite.
We do not come, as minding to content you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight,
We are not here. That you should here repent you,
The actors are at hand; and, by their show,
You shall know all, that you are like to know.

The. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

Lys. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.

Hip. Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in government.

The. His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

Enter Pyramus and Thisbe, Wall, Moonshine, and Lion.

Pro. Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
This man is Pyramus, if you would know;
This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present
Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder;
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.
This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there to woo.
This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,
The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,
Did scare away, or rather did affright;
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain:
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;

And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
At large discourse, while here they do remain.
[*Exeunt Prologue, Pyramus, Thisbe, Lion, and Moonshine.*

The. I wonder if the lion be to speak.

Dem. No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when many asses do.

Wall. In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;
And such a wall, as I would have you think,
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,
Did whisper often very secretly.
This loam, this rough-cast, and this stone, doth show
That I am that same wall; the truth is so:
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

The. Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

Dem. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

The. Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

Re-enter Pyramus.

Pyr. O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!
O night, which ever art when day is not!
O night, O night! alack, alack, alack,
I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot!
And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine!

Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne! [*Wall holds up his fingers.*
Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!
But what see I? No Thisby do I see.
O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!
Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

The. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

Pyr. No, in truth, sir, he should not. 'Deceiving me' is Thisby's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

Re-enter Thisbe.

This. O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
For parting my fair Pyramus and me!
My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

Pyr. I see a voice: now will I to the chink,
To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.
Thisby!

This. My love thou art, my love I think.

Pyr. Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;
And, like Limander, am I trusty still.

This. And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

Pyr. Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

This. As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

Pyr. O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!

This. I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

Pyr. Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

This. 'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.
[*Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe.*

Wall. Thus have I, wall, my part discharged so;
And, being done, thus wall away doth go. [*Exit.*

The. Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.

Dem. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to hear without warning.

Hip. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

The. The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

Hip. It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

The. If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

Re-enter Lion and Moonshine.

Lion. You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, n'am
A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam;
For, if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

The. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

Dem. The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

Lys. This lion is a very fox for his valour.

The. True; and a goose for his discretion.

Dem. Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry his discretion; and the fox carries the goose.

The. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour; for the goose carries not the fox. It is well: leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the moon.

Moon. This lanthorn doth the horned moon present;—

Dem. He should have worn the horns on his head.

The. He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

Moon. This lanthorn doth the horned moon present; Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.

The. This is the greatest error of all the rest: the man should be put into the lantern. How is it else the man i' the moon?

Dem. He dares not come there for the candle; for, you see, it is already in snuff.

Hip. I am aweary of this moon: would he would change!

The. It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

Lys. Proceed, Moon.

Moon. All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man i' the moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.

Dem. Why, all these should be in the lantern; for all these are in the moon. But, silence! here comes Thisbe.

Re-enter Thisbe.

This. This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?

Lion. [*Roaring*] Oh—— [*Thisbe runs off.*

Dem. Well roared, Lion.

The. Well run, Thisbe.

Hip. Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.

[*The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, and exit.*

The. Well moused, Lion.

Dem. And then came Pyramus.

Lys. And so the lion vanished.

Re-enter Pyramus.

Pyr. Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright;
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to take of truest Thisby sight.

But stay, O spite!
But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here!
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?
O dainty duck! O dear!
Thy mantle good,
What, stain'd with blood!
Approach, ye Furies fell!
O Fates, come, come,
Cut thread and thrum;
Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

The. This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.

Hip. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Pyr. O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?
Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear:

Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame
That lived, that loved, that liked, that look'd with cheer.
Come, tears, confound;
Out, sword, and wound
The pap of Pyramus;
Ay, that left pap,
Where heart doth hop: [*Stabs himself.*
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
Now am I dead,
Now am I fled;
My soul is in the sky:
Tongue, lose thy light;
Moon, take thy flight: [*Exit Moonshine.*
Now die, die, die, die, die. [*Dies.*

Dem. No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.

Lys. Less than an ace, man; for he is dead; he is nothing.

The. With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Hip. How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

The. She will find him by starlight. Here she comes; and her passion ends the play.

Re-enter Thisbe.

Hip. Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.

Dem. A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better; he for a man, God warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.

Lys. She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

Dem. And thus she means, videlicet:—

This. Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?
O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
Dead, dead? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks,
Are gone, are gone:
Lovers, make moan:
His eyes were green as leeks.
O Sisters Three,
Come, come to me,
With hands as pale as milk:
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore
With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word:
Come, trusty sword;
Come, blade, my breast imbrue: [*Stabs herself.*
And, farewell, friends;
Thus Thisby ends:
Adieu, adieu, adieu. [*Dies.*

The. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Dem. Ay, and Wall too.

Bot. [*Starting up*] No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?

The. No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players

are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy: and so it is, truly; and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask: let your epilogue alone. [*A dance.*
The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:
Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.
I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn,
As much as we this night have overwatch'd.
This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled
The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.
A fortnight hold we this solemnity,
In nightly revels and new jollity. [*Exeunt.*

Enter Puck.

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf behowls the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night,
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide:
And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,

Now are frolic: not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallow'd house:
I am sent with broom before,
To sweep the dust behind the door.

Enter Oberon and Titania with their train.

Obe. Through the house give glimmering light,
By the dead and drowsy fire:
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier;
And this ditty, after me,
Sing, and dance it trippingly.

Tita. First, rehearse your song by rote,
To each word a warbling note:
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing, and bless this place.

[*Song and dance.*

Obe. Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be:
And the issue there create
Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be;
And the blots of Nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand;
Never mole, hare lip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despised in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait;

And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace,
Ever shall in safety rest,
And the owner of it blest.
Trip away; make no stay;
Meet me all by break of day.
[*Exeunt Oberon, Titania, and train.*

Puck. If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here,
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend:
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call:
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends. [*Exit.*

Glossary.

Abridgement, an entertainment to while away the time; V. i. 39.
Aby, pay for; III. ii. 175.
Adamant, loadstone; II. i. 195.

From the early black-letter edition of the *Greate Herball.*

Address'd, ready; V. i. 106.
Admirable, to be wondered at; V. i. 27.
Advised; 'be advised' = "consider what you are doing"; I. i. 46.
Against, in preparation for; V. i. 75.
Aggravate; Bottom's blunder for "decrease"; I. ii. 81.
All, fully; II. i. 157.
An, if; I. ii. 50.
An if, if; II. ii. 153.
Antique, strange; V. i. 3.
Approve, prove; II. ii. 68.
Apricocks, apricots; III. i. 169.
Argument, subject of story; III. ii. 242.
Artificial, skilled in art; III. ii. 203.
As, that as; I. i. 42.
Ask, require; I. ii. 24.
Aunt, old dame; II. i. 51.
Austerity, strictness of life; I. i. 90.

Barm, froth, yeast; II. i. 38.
Barren, empty headed; III. ii. 13.
Bated, excepted; I. i. 190.
Beard, the prickles on the ears of corn; II. i. 95.
Belike, very likely; I. i. 130.
Bellows-mender, mender of the bellows of organs; I. ii. 41.
Bergomask dance, a rude clownish dance such as the people of the town Bergamo or of the province Bergamasco were wont to practise. "Bergamo, a town in the Venetian territory, capital of the old province Bergamasco, whose inhabitants used to be ridiculed as clownish"; V. i. 351, 360.
Beteem, accord, permit; I. i. 131.
Bill, list; I. ii. 105.

Blood, passion; I. i. 68; I. i. 74; birth, social rank; I. i. 135.
Bolt, arrow; II. i. 165.
Bootless, in vain, uselessly; II. i. 37.
Bosom, heart; I. i. 27.
Bottle, bundle, truss; IV. i. 37.
Bouncing, imperious; II. i. 70.
Brave touch, noble action; III. ii. 70.
Breath, voice, notes; II. i. 151.
Brief, short statement; V. i. 42.
Brisky, brisk; III. i. 97.
Broach'd, stabbed, spitted; V. i. 147.
Bully, comrade; III. i. 8.
Buskin'd, wearing the buskin, a boot with high heels, worn by hunters and huntresses; II. i. 71.

Canker-blossom, the worm that eats into blossoms; III. ii. 282.
Cankers, worms; II. ii. 3.
Capacity; 'to my c.,' *i.e.* "so far as I am able to understand"; V. i. 105.
Cavalery, cavalero, cavalier; IV. i. 24.
Centaurs; 'battle with the c.,' an allusion to the attack made on Hercules by the Centaurs when he was in pursuit of the Erymanthian boar; the battle referred to is not their famous contest with the Lapithæ; V. i. 44.
Chance; "how c.," *i.e.* "how chances it"; I. i. 129.
Changeling, a child substituted by the fairies for the one stolen by them; II. i. 23.
Cheek by jole, i.e. cheek to cheek, side by side; III. ii. 338.
Cheer, countenance; III. ii. 96; V. i. 293.
Chiding, barking; IV. i. 120.
Childing, productive, fertile; II. i. 112.
Church-way, leading to the church; V. i. 380.
Churl, boor, peasant; II. ii. 78.
Clerk, scholars; V. i. 93.
Coil, confusion, ado; III. ii. 339.
Collied, dark, black; I. i. 145.
Compact, composed, formed; V. i. 8.
Compare with, try to rival; II. ii. 99.
Con, learn by heart; I. ii. 99.
Concern, accord with, befit; I. i. 60.
Condole, probably one of Bottom's blunders, unless perhaps used in the sense of lament; I. ii. 26.
Confusion, ruin; I. i. 149.
Consecrate, consecrated; V. i. 413.
Constancy, consistency; V. i. 26.
Contagious, pestilential; II. i. 90.
Continents, banks; II. i. 92.
Courageous, happy, fortunate; IV. ii. 26.
Coy, fondle; IV. i. 2.
Crazed title, a title with a flaw in it; I. i. 92.

Create, created; V. i. 403.
Critical, censorious; V. i. 54.
Cry, pack of hounds; IV. i. 129.
Cupid's flower, the pansy, "love-in-idleness"; IV. i. 78.
Curst, shrewish; III. ii. 300.
Cut thread and thrum = cut everything, good and bad (vide *Thread* and *Thrum*); V. i. 285.

Dances and delight = delightful dances; II. i. 254.
Darkling, in the dark; II. ii. 86.
Dead, deadly, death-like; III. ii. 57.
Dear expense, a privilege dearly bought; I. i. 249.
Debate, contention; II. i. 116.
Defeated, cheated; IV. i. 162.
Defect, Bottom's blunder for "effect"; III. i. 40.
Derived; 'as well derived' = as well-born; I. i. 99.
Devices, plans, projects; I. ii. 104; performance; V. i. 50.
Dewberries, the fruit of the dewberry bush; III. i. 170.
Dewlap, the loose skin hanging from the throat of cattle; here used for "neck"; II. i. 50; *'dewlapp'd'*; IV. i. 127.
Dian's bud, probably the bud of the Agnus Castus or Chaste-tree; "the vertue of this herbe is that he wyll kepe man and woman chaste"; IV. i. 78.
Discharge, perform; I. ii. 95; IV. ii. 8.
Disfigure, to obliterate; I. i. 51.
Disfigure, Quince's blunder for "figure"; III. i. 61.
Distemperature, disorder of the elements; II. i. 106.
Dole, grief; V. i. 277.
Done; "when all is done," = when all is said and done; III. i. 16.
Dowager, a widow with a jointure; I. i. 5.
Drawn, with drawn sword; III. ii. 402.

Earthlier happy, happier as regards this world; I. i. 76.
Eat, ate; II. ii. 149.
Eglantine, sweetbriar; II. i. 252.
Egypt; 'brow of E.'=the brow of a gypsy (*i.e.* an Egyptian); V. i. 11.
Eight and six, alternate verses of four and three feet; the common ballad metre of the time; III. i. 25.
Embarked traders, traders embarked upon the sea; II. i. 127.
Enforced, forced, violated; III. i. 205.
Enough; 'you have enough,' *i.e.* you have heard enough to convict him; IV. i. 159.
Ercles = Hercules, whose twelve labours had often formed the subject of dramatic shows, the hero resembling Herod in his ranting; I. ii. 28.
Erewhile, a little while ago; III. ii. 274.

Estate unto, bestow upon; I. i. 98.
Ever, always; I. i. 150.
Exposition; Bottom's blunder for "disposition"; IV. i. 43.
Extenuate, mitigate, relax; I. i. 120.

Faint, pale; I. i. 215.
Fair, fairness, beauty; I. i. 182.
Fair, kindly; II. i. 199.
Fall, let fall, drop; V. i. 142.
Fancy, love; I. i. 155; IV. i. 168.
Fancy-free, free from the power of love; II. i. 164.
Fancy-sick, sick for love; III. ii. 96.
Favour, features; I. i. 186.
Favours, love-tokens; II. i. 12; nosegays of flowers; IV. i. 53.
Fell; 'passing fell,' extremely angry; II. i. 20.
Fellow, match, equal; IV. i. 38.
Figure, typify; I. i. 237.
Fire, will of the wisp; III. i. 112.
Flew'd, having an overhanging lip on the upper jaw; IV. i. 125.
Floods, waters; II. i. 103.
Flout, mock at; II. ii. 128.
Fond, foolish; II. ii. 88.
For the candle, because of the c.; V. i. 247.
Force; 'of force' = perforce; III. ii. 40.
Fordone, exhausted; V. i. 372.
Forgeries, idle inventions; II. i. 81.
Forth, out of, from; I. i. 164.
For that, because; II. i. 220.
Forty, used as an indefinite number; II. i. 176.
French crown color, light yellow, the color of the gold of the French crown; I. ii. 94.

Gallant = "gallantly" (which the Folios read); I. ii. 23.
Gawds, trifles, trinkets; I. i. 33.
Generally; Bottom's blunder for "severally"; I. ii. 2.
Glance at, hint at; II. i. 75.
Gleek, jest, scoff; III. i. 151.
Go about, attempt; IV. i. 211.
Gossip's bowl, originally a christening cup; thence applied to a drink usually prepared for christening feasts; its ingredients were ale, spice, sugar, and roasted *crabs* (*i.e.* crab-apples; II. i. 47.
Government, control; 'in government' = under control; V. i. 123.
Grace, favour granted; II. ii. 89.
Grim-look'd, grim-looking; V. i. 169.
Grow to a point, come to the point; I. ii. 10.

Hands; 'give me your hands,' applaud by clapping; V. i. 435.
Head; 'to his head' = to his face; I. i. 106.
Hearts, good fellows; IV. ii. 25.
Helen, a blunder for "Hero"; V. i. 198.

Hempen home-spuns, coarse fellows (rude mechanicals); III. i. 79.

Henchman, page, attendant; II. i. 121.

From an engraving (*temp.* Charles I.) in the Bagford collection.

Hight, is called; V. i. 139.

Horned moon, used perhaps quibblingly with reference to the material of Moonshine's lanthorn; V. i. 242.

Human, humane, courteous; II. ii. 57.

Human mortals, men, as distinguished from fairies, who were considered *mortal,* though not *human:* II. i. 101.

Imbrue, stain with blood; V. i. 343.

Immediately, purposely; I. i. 45.

Impeach, bring into question; II. i. 214.

In = on; II. i. 85.

Incorporate, made one body; III. ii. 208.

Injurious, insulting; III. ii. 195.

Intend, pretend; III. ii. 333.

Interchained, bound together; II. ii. 49.

Juvenal, juvenile, youth; III. i. 97.

Kind; 'in this kind,' in this respect; I. i. 54.

Knacks = knick-knacks; I. i. 34.

Knot-grass; 'hindering k.' was formerly believed to have the power of checking the growth of children; III. ii. 329.

Lakin; 'by 'r lakin,' *i.e.* by our ladykin, or little lady, *i.e.* the Virgin Mary; III. i. 14.

Latch'd, moistened, anointed; III. ii. 36.

Leave, give up; II. i. 197.

Leviathan, whale; II. i. 174.

Limander, a blunder for "Leander"; V. i. 197.

Lion-fell, lion's skin (but *cp.* Note); V. i. 224.

Lob, buffoon, clown; II. i. 16.

Lode-star, the leading star, the polar star; I. i. 183.

Lordship; 'unto his lordship, whose,' etc. = unto the government of him, to whose, etc.; I. i. 81.

Lose, forget; I. i. 114.

Love-in-idleness, the heartsease, or pansy, called "Cupid's flower"; II. i. 168.

Loves; 'of all loves,' for love's sake; II. ii. 154.

Luscious, delicious, sweet; II. i. 251.

Make mouths upon = "make faces at, mock at"; III. ii. 238.

May, can; V. i. 2.

Mazed, perplexed; II. i. 113.

Mazes, "figures marked out on village greens for rustic sports, such as the game called *running the figure of eight*"; II. i. 99.

Means, moans; V. i. 322.

Mechanicals, working-men; III. ii. 9.

Mimic, actor; III. ii. 19.

Minding, intending; V. i. 113.

Minimus, tiny creature; III. ii. 329.

Misgraffed, grafted on a wrong tree; I. i. 137.

Misprised, mistaken; III. ii. 74.

Misprision, mistake; III. ii. 90.

Momentany, momentary, lasting a moment; I. i. 143.

Morning's love, i.e. Cephalus; III. ii. 389.

Moused, torn in pieces, as a cat worries a mouse; V. i. 268.

Mouth, sound; IV. i. 128.

Murrion = infected with murrain, a disease among cattle; II. i. 97.

Musk-rose, described in Gerarde's *Herbal,* as "a flower of a white colour," with "certaine yellow seedes in the middle . . . of most writers reckoned among the wilde Roses"; II. i. 252.

Naught; "a thing of naught," a worthless thing; IV. ii. 14.

Neaf, fist; IV. i. 20.

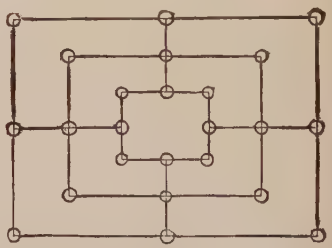
Nearly that concerns = that nearly c.; I. i. 126.

Neeze = sneeze; II. i. 56.

Next, nearest, first; III. ii. 2.

Night-rule, night revel; III. ii. 5.

Nine men's morris, "a plat of green turf cut into a sort of chess board, for the rustic youth to exercise their skill upon. The game was called 'nine men's morris' (or 'merrils,' *i.e.* 'counters' or 'pawns') because the players had each nine men which they moved along the lines cut in the ground—a diagram of three squares, one within the other—until one side had taken or penned up all those on the other"; II. i. 98.



From an engraving by F. W. Fairholt.

Ninus, the supposed founder of Nineveh, the husband of Semiramis, Queen of Babylon; V. i. 138.

Nole, noddle, head; III. ii. 17.
None; 'I will none,' *i.e.* "nothing to do with her, none of her"; III. ii. 169.

Obscenely; Bottom's blunder for (?) seemly; I. ii. 108.
Observance; 'to do o. to a morn of May,' *i.e.* "to observe the rights of May-day"; I. i. 167.
Observation = observance of May-day; IV. i. 109.
Of, by; II. ii. 134; for, III. i. 44
On; "fond on," *i.e.* "doting on"; II. i. 266.
On = of; V. i. 227.
Orange-tawny, dark yellow; I. ii. 93.
Orbs, rings of rich green grass thought to be caused by the fairies; II. i. 9.
Original = originators; II. i. 117.
Other, others; IV. i. 71.
Ounce, a kind of lynx; II. ii. 30.
Ousel, blackbird; III. i. 128.
Overbear, overrule; IV. i. 184.
Owe, own; II. ii. 79.
Oxlips, a kind of cowslip not often found wild; II. i. 250.

Pageant, show, exhibition; III. ii. 114.
Palpable-gross, palpably gross; V. i. 365.
Pard = leopard; II. ii. 31.
Parlous = perilous; III. i. 14.
Parts, qualities; III. ii. 153.
Pat, pat, exactly, just as it should be; III. i. 2.
Patched, wearing a coat of various colours; "patched fool," *i.e.* "a motley fool"; IV. i. 214.
Patches, clowns; III. ii. 9.
Patent; "virgin patent," privilege of virginity; I. i. 80.
Pelting, paltry; II. i. 91.
Pensioners, retainers; II. i. 10.
Periods, full stops; V. i. 96.
Pert, lively; I. i. 13.
Phibbus = Phœbus; I. ii. 34.
Pilgrimage; 'maiden pilgrimage,' a passing through life unwedded; I. i. 75.
Plain-song, used as an epithet of the cuckoo, with reference to its simple, monotonous note; a "plain-song" is a melody without any variations; III. i. 135.
Points; 'stand upon points,' used quibblingly, (1) "mind his stops," and (2) "be overscrupulous"; V. i. 118.
Possess'd; 'as well possess'd,' possessed of as much wealth; I. i. 100.
Preferred, submitted for approval; IV. ii. 38.
Preposterously, perversely; III. ii. 121.
Presently = immediately; IV. ii. 36.
Prevailment, weight, sway; I. i. 35.
Prey, the act of preying; II. ii. 150.
Princess, paragon, perfection; III. ii. 144.
Privilege, safeguard, protection; II. i. 220.

Procrus, a blunder for "Procris," the wife of Cephalus; V. i. 199, 200.
Prodigious, unnatural; V. i. 409.
Prologue, speaker of the prologue; V. i. 106.
Proper, fine, handsome; I. ii. 85.
Properties; a theatrical term for all the adjuncts of a play, except the scenery and the dresses of the actors; I. ii. 108.
Protest, vow; I. i. 89.
Pumps, low shoes; IV. ii. 36.
Purple-in-grain, dyed deep red; I. ii. 93.

Quail, quell, overpower; V. i. 286.
Quell, kill; V. i. 286.
Quern, a mill for grinding corn by hand; II. i. 36.
Questions, arguings; II. i. 235.

Recorder, a kind of flageolet; V. i. 123.
Rent, rend; III. ii. 215.
Rere-mice, bats; II. ii. 4.
Respect; 'in my r.,' *i.e.* "in my estimation"; II. i. 224.
Respects, regards; I. i. 160.
Right maid, true maid; III. ii. 302.
Ringlets, the circles on the greensward, supposed to be made by the fairies (*cp. Orbs*); II. i. 86.
Ripe, grow ripe; II. i. 118.
Ripe, ready for presentation; V. i. 42.
Round; 'dance in our r.,' a dance in a circle; II. i. 140.

From a woodcut in the Roxburghe collection of ballads.

Roundel, dance in a circle; II. ii. 1.
Run through fire; a proverbial expression signifying "to do impossibilities"; II. ii. 103.

Sad, serious; IV. i. 100.
Sanded, sandy coloured; IV. i. 125.
Savours, scents, fragrance; II. i. 13.
Schooling, instructions; I. i. 116.
Scrip, "scroll," *i.e.* list of actors; I. ii. 3.
Seal, pledge; III. ii. 144.
Seething, heated, excited; V. i. 4.
Self-affairs, my own business; I. i. 113.

Sensible, capable of feeling; V. i. 181.
Serpent's tongue, i.e. hissing, as a sign of disapproval; V. i. 430.
Shafalus, a blunder for "Cephalus," who remained true to his wife Procris notwithstanding Aurora's love for him; V. i. 199, 200.
Sheen, brightness; II. i. 29.
Shore = shorn; V. i. 338.
Shrewd, mischievous; II. i. 33.
Simpleness, simplicity; V. i. 83.
Sinister, left; V. i. 163.
Sisters Three, i.e. the Fates; V. i. 334.
Sleep, sleeping; IV. i. 152.
Small, in a treble voice like a boy or a woman; I. ii. 49.
Snuff, used equivocally; *'to be in snuff'* = "to be offended"; V. i. 248.
So, in the same manner; IV. i. 125.
Solemnities, nuptial festivities; I. i. 11.
Solemnly, with due ceremony; IV. i. 93.
Sooth, truth; II. ii. 129.
Sort, company, crew; III. ii. 13.
Sorting; 'not s. with,' not befitting; V. i. 55.
Sphery, star-like; II. ii. 99.
Spleen, sudden passion; I. .. 146.
Split; 'to make all split,' a proverbial expression used to denote violent action; originally used by sailors; I. ii. 29.
Spotted, polluted; I. i. 110.
Spring; 'middle summer's spring,' the beginning of midsummer; II. i. 82.
Square, wrangle, squabble; II. i. 30.
Stay = to stay; II. i. 138.
Stealth, stealing away; III. ii. 310.
Steppe (so Quarto 1), probably an error for "steep" (the reading of the Folios and Quarto 2); hence Milton's "Indian steep" (*Comus,* 139); it is doubtful whether Shakespeare was acquainted with this Russian term; II. i. 69.
Still, always, ever; I. i. 212.
Stood upon, depended upon; I. i. 139.
Streak, touch softly; II. i. 257.
Stretch'd, strained; 'extremely s.,' *i.e.* "strained to the utmost"; V. i. 80.
Strings, to tie on false beards with; IV. ii. 35.
Superpraise, overpraise; III. ii. 153.

Tartar's bow; the Tartars or Parthians were famous for their skill in archery; in the old maps Tartary included the ancient Parthia; III. ii. 101.
Tear; 'to tear a cat in,' a proverbial phrase = to rant violently; I. ii. 29.
Thick-skin, dolt; III. ii. 13.

Thracian singer, i.e. Orpheus; "His grief for the loss of Eurydice led him to treat with contempt the Thracian women, who in revenge tore him to pieces under the excitement of their Bacchanalian orgies"; V. i. 49.
Thread, the warp; V. i. 291.
Throws; throws off, sheds; II. i. 255.
Thrum, the loose end of a weaver's warp; V. i. 285.
'Tide, betide; V. i. 204.
Tiring-house, dressing-room; III. i. 4.
Toward, in progress; III. i. 81.
Toys, trifles; 'fairy toys,' fanciful tales; V. i. 3.
Trace, traverse; II. i. 25.
Translated, transformed; I. i. 191; III. i. 122.
Transported, removed, carried off; IV. ii. 4.
Triple Hecate, i.e. ruling in three capacities—as Luna or Cynthia in heaven, Diana on earth, and Hecate in hell; V. i. 381.
Triumph, public show; I. i. 19.
Troth, truth; II. ii. 36.
Tuneable, tuneful; I. i. 184.

Unbreathed, unexercised; V. i. 74.
Unharden'd, impressionable; I. i. 35.
Upon, by; II. i. 244.

Vantage; 'with vantage,' having the advantage; I. i. 102.
Vaward = vanguard; IV. i. 110.
Villagery, a collective word, meaning either (1) village population, or (2) villages; II. i. 35.
Virtue; 'fair virtue's force,' *i.e.* the power of thy fairness; III. i. 144.
Voice, approval; I. i. 54.
Votaress, a vestal vowed to virginity; II. i. 163.

Wandering knight = knight errant; I. ii. 44.
Want, lack; II. i. 101.
Wanton, luxuriant, thick; II. i. 99.
Wasted, consumed; V. i. 372.
Ways; 'all ways,' in all directions; IV. i. 40.
Weed, robe; II. i. 256.
Where (dissyllabic); II. i. 249.
Where = wherever; IV. i. 157.
Whether (monosyllabic); I. i. 69.
Withering out, delaying the enjoyment of; I. i. 6.
Without, outside of; I. i. 165; beyond the reach of; IV. i. 158.
Wode, mad (with a play upon "wood"); II. i. 192.
Woodbine, honeysuckle; II. i. 251; probably "convulvulus or bindweed"; IV. i. 46.
Worm, serpent; III. ii. 71.
Wrath, wrathful; II. i. 20.

You (ethic dative); I. ii. 81, 82.

Critical Notes.

BY ISRAEL GOLLANCZ.

I. i. 10. '*new-bent*'; Rowe's correction of '*now bent,*' the reading of the Quartos and Folios.

I. i. 11. '*Philostrate*' is the name assumed by Arcite in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*; it occurs too in Plutarch's *Lives,* where are to be found also the names Lysander and Demetrius.

I. i. 27. The second Folio reads, '*this hath bewitched*'; the earlier edition, '*this man*'; perhaps we should read '*this man hath 'witched.*'

I. i. 44. '*our law*'; Solon's laws gave a father the power of life and death over his child.

I. i. 159, 160. These lines should perhaps be transposed.

I. i. 167. '*to do observance to a morn of May,*' *cp. Knight's Tale,* 1500: '*And for to doon his observance to May.*'

I. i. 219. '*stranger companies*'; Theobald's emendation of '*strange companions,*' which is the reading of the Quartos and Folios.

I. ii. 11. '*The most lamentable comedy,*' etc. *Cp.* the title of Preston's *Cambyses,* '*a lamentable tragedy mixed full of pleasant mirth,*' etc.

I. ii. 51. '*Thisne, Thisne,*' so the Quartos and Folios; perhaps this spelling was intentional to represent Bottom's attempt to speak the name 'in a monstrous little voice.' The words may, however, be an error for '*thisne, thisne,*' *i.e.* 'in this manner, in this manner,' '*thissen*' being used in this sense in various dialects.

II. i. 54, 55. The Quartos and Folios read '*coffe . . . loffe,*' for the sake of the rhyme.

II. i. 58. '*room*'; probably pronounced as a dissyllable.

II. i. 78. '*Perigenia,*' called 'Perigouna' in North's *Plutarch*; she was the daughter of the famous robber Sinnis, by whom Theseus had a son, Menaloppus.

II. i. 79. '*Ægle*'; Rowe's correction for '*Eagles*' of the Quartos and Folios; probably '*Eagles*' was for '*Ægles,*' a form due to North's *Plutarch,* where it is stated that some think Theseus

left Ariadne "because he was in love with another, as by these verses should appear,

'Ægles the nymph was lov'd of Theseus,
Who was the daughter of Panopeus.'"

II. i. 80 *Antiopa*, said to be the name of the Amazon queen, and the mother of Hippolytus.

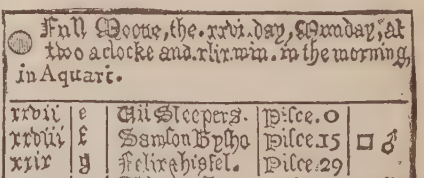
II. i. 231. *'Daphne holds the chase'*; the story tells how Apollo pursued Daphne, who was changed into a laurel-tree as he reached her.

From an early MS. of Maundevile's *Travels.*

II. i. 232. *'the dove pursues the griffin'*; the accompanying illustration of a griffin is from an early MS. of Maundevile's *Travels.*

III. i. 36-47. This was probably suggested by an actual incident which occurred during the Kenilworth festivities, when one Harry Goldingham, who was to represent Arion upon the Dolphin's back, tore off his disguise, and swore he was none of Arion (*cp.* Scott's use of this story in *Kenilworth*).

III. i. 54. *'A calendar, a calendar . . . find out moonshine.'* (*Cp.* illustration.)


Full Moone, the. xxvi. day, Monday, at two a clocke and. xlix. min. in the morning, in Aquari.

xxvii	e	All Sleepers.	Pisce. 0	
xxviii	f	Samson Bytho	Pisce 15	☐ ♂
xxix	g	Felix Hipsel.	Pisce 29	
xxx	a	Abdon & Sen.	Aries 13	☐ ♄
xxxi	b	Germane.	Arie. 28	

From the *Almanacke* of Walter Gray for 1591.

III. i. 190. *'Squash,' i.e.* an unripe peascod.

III. ii. 36. *'latch'd'*; the word *'latch'* in this passage, as Prof. Skeat has pointed out, is not connected with the ordinary *'latch,'* 'to catch,' but is etymologically the casual form of *'leak,'* and means 'to cause to drop, to drip.'

III. ii. 119. *'sport alone,' i.e.* 'by itself, without anything else'; others render 'alone' by 'above all things, without a parallel.'

III. ii. 188. *'oes'*; *o* was used for anything round, among other things for circular discs of metal used for ornaments; *cp.* Bacon,

Essay xxxvii.: "And Oes, and Spangs, as they are of no great cost, so they are of most glory."

III. ii. 204. '*needles,*' a monosyllable; '*needle*' was often spelt '*neeld*' in Old English.

III. ii. 212-214. "Helena says, 'we had two seeming bodies but one heart.' She then exemplifies her position by a simile—'we had two of the first, *i.e.* bodies, like the double coats in heraldry that belong to man and wife as one person, but which, like our single heart, have but one crest.'"

III. ii. 257. '*No, no; he'll stay.* The Cambridge Edition, '*No, no; he'll . . . seem*'; the first Quarto, '*heele seem*'; the second, '*hee'l seem*'; the first Folio, '*No, no, Sir, seem.*' The passage is clearly corrupt in the old editions. Mr. Orson ingeniously suggests:—

"*No, no, sir; still*
Seeme to breake loose,"

'*heele*' being an easy misreading of '*stille.*' The present editor has added '*stay*' as a mere conjecture.

III. ii. 379. '*Night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast.*' (*Cp.* the accompanying illustration.)

From Pynson's edition of the *Shepherd's Kalendar.*

IV. i. 31. '*a reasonable good ear in music*'; weavers were supposed to be fond of music, more especially of psalm-singing; *cp.* 1 *Henry IV.*, II. iv. 146, '*I would I were a weaver, I could sing psalms.*'

IV. i. 46. '*So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle*'; commonly '*woodbine*' is identical with '*honeysuckle,*' but it is also used by Elizabethans for 'convolvulus' and 'ivy.' Shakespeare,

however, uses the word in two other passages (II. i. 251, and *Much Ado,* III. i. 30) in the sense of 'honeysuckle'; hence Warburton suggested:—

> '*So doth the woodbine, the sweet honeysuckle,*
> *Gently entwist the maple, ivy so,*' etc.

Johnson thought that '*woodbine*' was the plant, and '*honeysuckle*' the flower. These suggestions are not satisfactory: the simplest way out of the difficulty is to take 'woodbine' as equivalent to 'convolvulus' or 'bindweed'; *cp.* Ben Jonson's *Vision of Delight*:—

> '*behold!*
> *How the blue blindweed doth itself infold*
> *With honeysuckle.*'

IV. i. 78. '*Dian's bud*'; it has been thought that perhaps '*Dian's bud*' = 'Diana's rose,' 'the rose of England's Virgin Queen'; '*Diana's Rose*' is actually used in this complimentary sense in Greene's *Friar Bacon.*

IV. i. 87. '*Than common sleep,*' etc.; the Quartos and first two Folios read '*sleepe: of all these, fine the sense*'; the correction is Theobald's.

IV. i. 95. '*prosperity*'; so the first Quarto; the second and Folios, '*posterity.*'

IV. i. 121. '*fountains*'; perhaps an error for '*mountains.*'

V. i. 47. '*my kinsman Hercules*'; *cp.* North's *Plutarch, Life of Theseus*: "they (Theseus and Hercules) were near kinsmen, being cousins removed by the mother's side."

V. i. 54. '*critical,*' *i.e.* 'censorious,' as in the well-known utterance of Iago, '*I am nothing, if not critical*' (*Othello,* II. i. 120).

V. i. 59. '*wondrous strange snow*'; '*strange*' is hardly the epithet one would expect, and various emendations have been suggested:—'*strange black,*' '*strong snow,*' '*swarthy snow,*' '*sable-snow,*' '*and, wondrous strange! yet snow.*' Perhaps the most plausible conjecture is Mr. S. W. Orson's '*wondrous flaming snow*'; *cp.* "What strange fits be these, Philautus, that burn thee with such a heat, that thou shakest for cold, and all thy body in a shivering sweat, in *a flaming ice,* melteth like wax and hardeneth like the adamant" (Lyly's *Euphues,* ed. Arber, p. 311).

V. i. 91. '*And what poor duty,*' etc.; Coleridge proposed:—

> '*And what poor duty cannot do, yet would,*
> *Noble respect takes it,*' etc.

The metre is defective as the lines stand. Theobald read '*poor*

willing duty . . . Noble respect.' The meaning is sufficiently clear, and recalls *Love's Labour's Lost,* V. ii. 516, *'That sport best pleases that doth least know how,'* etc. *Takes it in might* = 'regards the ability or effort of the performance.'

V. i. 106. *'the Prologue is address'd*; *i.e.* the speaker of the p. is ready.

From a woodcut in the *Antigone* of G. P. Trapolini (Padua, 1581).

V. i. 118. *'stand upon points'*; Quince's punctuation reminds one of the reading of Roister Doister's letter to Mistress Constance in the old comedy (*cp. Roister Doister,* iii. 3).

V. i. 139. *'name'*; as there is no rhyme to *name,* the loss of a line is to be inferred, or perhaps we should read *'which by name Lion hight.'*

V. i. 163. *'And this the cranny is.'* (*Cp.* the following illustration.)

From a Dutch drama on the subject of Pyramus and Thisbe (Amsterdam, 1640.)

V. i. 207. *'mural down'*; the Quartos read *'Moon used'*; the Folios, *'morall downe'*; the emendation *'mural'* was due to Pope.

V. i. 224. *'n'am lion fell'*; the Quartos and Folios read *'am lion fell,' i.e.* a fierce lion; but Snug wishes to say 'he is not a lion,' wherefore the words have been hyphened by most modern editors, including the Cambridge Edition, 'lion-fell,'

i.e. 'a lion's skin. Johnson understood '*neither*' before '*a lion fell*'; Rowe read '*No lion fell.*' I am strongly inclined to believe that Shakespeare wrote '*n'am,*' an archaic form, like *nill* (*i.e.* ne will). In Gascoigne's *Steele Glas* the following couplet occurs, remarkably suggestive of our text:—

> "*I n'am a man, as some do think I am;*
> (*Laugh not good lord*), *I am indede a dame.*"

Considering Gascoigne's intimate connection with the Kenilworth Festivities, a strong case could be made out for the theory that Snug's couplet is a direct parody of the lines in the *Steele Glas.*

From a seal affixed to a deed dated 1335.

V. i. 256-8. '*I, the man i' the moon; this thornbush my thornbush; and this dog my dog.*' (*Cp.* illustration.)

V. i. 269, 270. Spedding proposed to invert these lines.

V. i. 273. '*gleams*'; the Quartos and Folio 1 read '*beams*'; Folio 2, '*streams.*'

V. i. 319, 320. '*he for a man—God bless us,*' omitted in the Folios, probably in consequence of the statute of James I. forbidding profane speaking, or use of 'the holy name of God.'

V. i. 322. '*means,*' changed by Theobald to '*moans.*' . . . '*Mean*' in the sense of 'to lament,' an archaic form, is really more correct than 'moan,' and probably intentionally used by Shakespeare to harmonize with the archaisms of the interlude.

V. i. 370. '*behowls*'; Theobald's emendation of '*beholds,*' the reading of the Quartos and Folios.

From a woodcut in the *Mad Prankes* (of Robin Good-fellow), 1628.

V. i. 387. '*I am sent with broom before.*' *Cp.* illustration.)

V. i. 393. '*this ditty*'; Johnson supposes that two songs are lost, one led by Titania, and one by Oberon.

V. i. 417, 418. These lines should obviously be transposed in order to make sense of the passage.

Explanatory Notes.

The Explanatory Notes in this edition have been specially selected and adapted, with emendations after the latest and best authorities, from the most eminent Shakespearian scholars and commentators, including Johnson, Malone, Steevens, Singer, Dyce, Hudson, White, Furness, Dowden, and others. This method, here introduced for the first time, provides the best annotation of Shakespeare ever embraced in a single edition.

ACT FIRST.

Scene I.

20. *duke*:—This has been set down as a misapplication of a modern title. If it be such, Shakespeare is not responsible for it, as Theseus is repeatedly called *duk* in Chaucer's Knight's Tale, to which the Poet was evidently indebted for some of the material of this play. But indeed this application of *duke* to the heroes of antiquity was quite common; the word being from the Latin *dux*, which means a chief or leader of any sort. Thus in 1 *Chronicles*, i. 51, we have a list of "the *dukes* of Edom." We will subjoin the opening of The Knight's Tale, as illustrating both the matter in hand and the general scope of the Poet's obligations in that quarter:—

> "Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
> Ther was a duk that highte Theseus.
> Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
> And in his time swiche a conquerour,
> That greter was ther non under the sonne.
> Ful many a riche contree had he wonne.
> What with his wisdom and his chevalrie,
> He conquerd all the regne of Feminie,
> That whilom was ycleped Scythia;
> And wedded the fresshe quene Ipolita,
> And brought hire home with him to his contree

With mochel glorie and gret solempnitee,
And eke hire yonge suster Emelie.
And thus with victorie and with melodie
Let I this worthy duk to Athenes ride,
And all his host in armes him beside."

131. *Beteem*:—This term for *permit* or *allow* is used by Shakespeare only here and in *Hamlet,* I. ii., in the familiar passage (lines 140-142): "So loving to my mother, that he might not *beteem* the winds of heaven visit her face too roughly." Spenser has in *The Faerie Queene,* ii. 8, 19:—

"So would I (said th' enchaunter) glad and faine
Beteeme to you this sword, you to defend."

141-149. *Or, if there were a sympathy,* etc.:—Milton seems to have remembered this passage in his account of the "innumerable disturbances on earth through female snares," *Paradise Lost,* Book x.:—

"For either
He never shall find out fit mate, but such
As some misfortune brings him, or mistake;
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain,
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd
By a far worse; or, if she love, withheld
By parents; or his happiest choice too late
Shall meet, already link'd and wedlock-bound
To a fell adversary, his hate or shame:
Which infinite calamity shall cause
To human life, and household peace confound."

It did not fall within Milton's purpose to consider that poor woman is a sufferer in these disturbances as well as man: he views her as the cause, not as the victim, of these mischiefs; whereas Shakespeare regards both sexes as subject to them by an edict of Destiny.

167. *To do observance to a morn of May*:—Here we may perceive that Shakespeare has been with Chaucer:—

"Thus passeth yere by yere, and day by day,
Till it felle ones in a morwe of May,
That Emelie, that fayrer was to sene
Than is the lilie upon his stalke grene,

And fressher than the May with floures newe,
(For with the rose colour strof hire hewe;
I n'ot which was the finer of hem two,)
Er it was day, as she was wont to do,
She was arisen, and all redy dight.
For May wol have no slogardie a-night.
The seson priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh him out of his slepe to sterte,
And sayth, arise and *do thin observance.*"

Touching the rites of this ancient holiday—a time that inspired Chaucer to sing,

"O Maye, with all thy floures and thy grene,
Right welcome be thou, faire freshe May,
I hope that I some grene here getten may"—

Stowe informs us how our ancestors were wont to go out into "the sweet meadows and green woods, there to rejoice their spirits with the beauty and savour of sweet flowers, and with the harmony of birds praising God in their kind." But Stubbs, the atrabilious Puritan, in his *Anatomie of Abuses,* speaks very differently; he accounts for the delight others take in the season thus: "And no marvel, for there is a great lord present among them, as superintendent over their pastimes and sports, namely, Sathan, Prince of Hell."

246-251. *I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight,* etc.:—"I am convinced," says Coleridge, "that Shakespeare availed himself of the title of this play in his own mind, and worked upon it as a dream throughout, but especially, and, perhaps, unpleasingly, in this broad determination of ungrateful treachery in Helena, so undisguisedly avowed to herself, and this, too, after the witty cool philosophizing that precedes. The act itself is natural, and the resolve so to act is, I fear, likewise too true a picture of the lax hold which principles have on a woman's heart, when opposed to, or even separated from, passion and inclination. For women are less hypocrites to their own minds than men are, because in general they feel less proportionate abhorrence of moral evil in and for itself, and more of its outward consequences, as detection, and loss of character than men—their natures being almost wholly extroitive. Still, however just in itself, the representation of this is not poetical; we shrink from it, and cannot harmonize it with the ideal."

Scene II.

48, 49. *you shall play*, etc.:—See *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. i. 48, 49, where Slender says of Anne Page, "She has brown hair, and *speaks small* like a woman." This speech of Peter Quince's shows, what is known from other sources, that the parts of women were used to be played by boys, or, if these could not be had, by men in masks. Prynne, the Puritan hero, informs us that female actors appeared on the stage at the Blackfriars as early as 1629, and he comes down upon women's acting with a tempest of wrath, while he is still harder upon the personating of women by boys and men.

92-95. *your straw colour beard*, etc.:—It seems to have been a custom to stain or dye the beard. So Ben Jonson in *The Alchemist*: "He has *dyed his beard* and all."

96, 97. This is an allusion to the baldness attendant upon a particular stage of what was then termed the *French* disease.

105. *properties*:—A curious list of these is given in Brome's comedy, *The Antipodes*, 1640:—

> "He has got into our tiring-house amongst us,
> And ta'en a strict survey of all our properties;
> Our statues and our images of gods,
> Our planets and our constellations,
> Our giants, monsters, furies, beasts, and bugbears,
> Our helmets, shields and vizors, hairs and beards,
> Our pasteboard marchpanes, and our wooden pies."

ACT SECOND.

Scene I.

2 *et seq.* Collier informs us that "Coleridge, in his lectures in 1818, was very emphatic in his praise of the beauty of these lines; 'the measure,' he said, 'had been invented and employed by Shakespeare for the sake of its appropriateness to the rapid and airy motion of the Fairy by whom the passage is delivered.'" And in his *Literary Remains*, after analyzing the measure, he speaks of the "delightful effect on the ear," caused by "the sweet transition" from the amphimacers of the first four lines to the trochaic of the next two. The *orbs* here referred to were the

verdant circles which the old superstition thus delineated called fairy rings, supposing them to be made by the night-tripping fairies dancing their merry roundels. As the ground became parched under the feet of the moonlight dancers, Puck's office was to refresh it with sprinklings of dew, thus making it greener than ever. Science has of course brushed away the charm that once hung about these rings, which, it tells us, are merely circular growths of fungi. The allusion in the term *pensioners* is to Elizabeth's band of Gentleman *Pensioners,* who were chosen from among the handsomest and tallest young men of family and fortune; they were dressed in habits richly garnished with *gold lace.*

15. *hang a pearl,* etc.:—In the old comedy of *The Wisdome of Doctor Dodypoll,* before 1600, an enchanter says:—

> "'Twas I that led you through the painted meads,
> Where the light fairies danc'd upon the flowers,
> *Hanging on every leaf an orient pearl.*"

16. *lob of spirits*:—It would seem that Puck, though he could "put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes," was heavy and sluggish in comparison with the other fairies: he was the *lubber* of the spirit tribe. Shakespeare's "*lob* of spirits" is the same as Milton's "*lubbar* fiend," thus spoken of in *L'Allegro*:—

> "And he, by friar's lantern led,
> Tells how the drudging goblin swet,
> To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
> When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
> His shadowy flail hath thresh'd the corn,
> That ten day-labourers could not end:
> Then lies him down the lubbar fiend,
> And, stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
> Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
> And crop-full out of doors he flings,
> Ere the first cock his matin rings."

23. *changeling*:—It was a roguish custom of the fairies, if a child of great promise were born, to steal it away, and leave an ugly, or foolish, or ill-conditioned one in its stead. So in *The Faerie Queene,* i. 10. 65:—

> "From thence a Faery thee unweeting reft,
> There, as thou sleptst in tender swadling band,
> And her base Elfin brood there for thee left:
> Such, men do *chaungelings* call, so chaung'd by Faeries theft."

Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Religio Medici,* speaking of the devil's practices, says: "Of all the delusions wherewith he deceives mortality, there is not any that puzzleth me more than the legerdemain of *changelings.*" How much comfort this old belief sometimes gave to parents, may be seen from Drayton's *Nymphidia*:—

"And when a child haps to be got,
Which after proves an idiot,
When folk perceive it thriveth not,
The fault therein to smother,
Some silly, doating, brainless calf,
That understands things by the half,
Says that the fairy left this aulf,
And took away the other."

32-42. *Either I mistake,* etc.:—That this whole account of Puck was gathered from the popular notions of the time might be shown from many passages. Thus in Harsnet's *Declaration of Popish Impostures*: "And if that the bowl of curds and cream were not duly set out for Robin Goodfellow, the friar, and Sisse the dairy-maid, why, then either the pottage was burnt next day in the pot, or the cheeses would not curdle, or the butter would not come, or the ale in the fat never would have good head." Likewise, in Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*: "Your grandames' maids were wont to set a bowl of milk for him, for his pains in grinding malt and mustard, and sweeping the house at midnight; —this white bread and milk was his standing fee." See also the preceding quotation from Milton, the ballad entitled The Merry Pranks of Robin Goodfellow, in Percy's *Reliques,* and Drayton's *Nymphidia,* from the last of which we subjoin one stanza:—

"This Puck seems but a dreaming dolt,
Still walking like a ragged colt,
And oft out of a bush doth bolt,
Of purpose to deceive us;
And, leading us, makes us to stray
Long winter nights out of the way,
And when we stick in mire and clay,
He doth with laughter leave us."

54. *And 'tailor' cries*:—Dr. Johnson thought he remembered to have heard this ludicrous exclamation upon a person's seat

slipping from under him. He that slips from his chair falls as a *tailor* squats upon his board.

56. *waxen in their mirth*:—*Waxen* is an old plural form of the verb *to wax*; the meaning of course being, *increase* in their mirth.

60. *proud Titania*:—"Shakespeare's elf queen," says Herford, "seems to be more original than either [Oberon or Puck]. Tradition had less definitely fixed her character. Spenser had quite recently (1590) been able to apply the name to a being as little related to the legendary mistress of Thomas of Ercildoun as to Chaucer's Proserpina. Shakespeare himself gave her a Puck character as Mab in *Romeo and Juliet*. Classical scholars widely connected her with Diana. Titania is distinct from all these, but she seems to have affinities both with Diana and Proserpina. Like the queen of Hades, Shakespeare's fairies are of the night; they 'run from the presence of the sun, following darkness like a dream.' It was an easy step thence to bring them into a special relation to the moon, and thus they are made to pursue the chariot of the 'triple Hecate,' to sing hymns and carols to her, or neglect to sing them. The Poet of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* was evidently attracted by the classical legends of the Moon, and Lyly's mythic drama on the Endymion story had probably contributed to the attraction. This aspect of his fairydom seems to have had its share in suggesting the name Titania, which he found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (iii. 173) as a synonym for Diana. Titania herself is, however, a very different being from the chaste maiden-deity. She is no goddess, but a fairy, childlike in her innocence and her impulsiveness and, above all, helplessly subdued by the shafts of that casual and irrational love which the 'odd beams of the watery moon' had instantly quenched. But if she is not 'cold,' she is the embodiment of feminine daintiness and delicacy; and all about her is imagined with an exquisite instinct for the elemental life of flower and insect and all the dainty and delicate things of nature."

105. *rheumatic diseases*:—*Rheumatic* is here accented on the first syllable, as also in *Venus and Adonis*, 135: "O'erworn, despised, *rheumatic* and cold." The word, as Halliwell says, is not here used in its modern acceptation. Colds, coughs, etc., were included under this class of complaints.

124. *the spiced Indian air*:—*Bartholomæus de Glanvilla*, 1582, is cited as follows: "As the rivers there are very many, so are they very great, through whose watery overflowing it commeth

to passe that in the moyst grounde, the force of the sunne approaching, ingendreth or bringeth forth all things in great quantitie, and seemeth almost to fill the whole world *with spice* and precious stones, of which it aboundeth more than all other countries of the world."

168 *et seq. love-in-idleness,* etc.:—The love-juice with which the eyes of the lovers and Titania were anointed, was, according to Herford, "first brought into connection with fairy-lore by Shakespeare. It was perhaps suggested by a passage in the *Diana* of Montemayor (tr. 1579), a book which the *Two Gentlemen* shows him to have known. Upon this juice and its effects the whole plot turns. The attempts of Warburton and Halfin to read complex personal allusions into the pretty myth of the little western flower beyond the obvious compliment to Elizabeth, are therefore open to grave doubt. With the same delight in blending classical and romantic myths which marks his handling of the fairy world, Shakespeare sought a link between the classical and the romance symbols for the caprice and incalculableness of love—between the arrow of Cupid and the love-juice. Such a link he found in the country name for the pansy—'love-in-idleness.' It receives the arrow and yields the juice. Cupid himself, the boy, is replaced by the king of the childlike fairies, and in Oberon's hands the juice provokes sudden accesses of unreasoning love. From these wayward caprices of passion, Theseus and Hippolyta, once sufficiently subject to them, now stand severely apart."

195. *You draw me, . . . adamant*:—In *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature,* by Edward Fenton, 1569, is the following: "There is now a dayes a kind of *adamant* which draweth unto it fleshe, and the same so strongly, that it hath power to knit and tie together two mouthes of contrary persons, and drawe the heart of a man out of his bodie without offending any part of him."

Scene II.

45. *O, take the sense,* etc.:—That is, understand the meaning of my innocence, or my innocent meaning.

120. *Reason becomes,* etc.:—Though this play be but a dream, Lysander shows a good deal of human nature, as it is when awake, or claiming to be so, in thus attributing to riper reason a change wrought in his vision by enchantment. The bewitching juice only develops a "higher law" in him. And in like sort it

often happens that men, mistaking change for progress, grow the more opinionated for their frequent changes of opinion, thus turning the natural arguments of modesty into a basis of conceit.

ACT THIRD.

Scene I.

102. *cues and all*:—The *cues* were the last words of the preceding speech, which served as a hint to him who was to speak next.

108 *et seq. I'll follow you,* etc.:—The Protean versatility of Puck is celebrated in whatsoever has come down to us respecting him. Thus in an old tract entitled *Robin Goodfellow, his Mad Pranks and Merry Jests*:—

> "Thou hast the power to change thy shape
> To horse, to hog, to dog, to ape."

And in a ballad given in the Introduction to the same tract:—

> "Sometimes a walking fire he'd be,
> And lead them from their way."

128, 129. *The ousel cock,* etc.:—In the opinion of some commentators, the Poet or Bottom is a little out here in his ornithology. This opinion has probably arisen from a change in the use of the name since Shakespeare's day; *ousel* being then used to denote the *blackbird,* as is evident from the Thirteenth Song of Drayton's *Polyolbion*:—

> "The *woosel* near at hand, that hath a golden bill,
> As nature him had mark'd of purpose t' let us see
> That from all other birds his tunes should different be;
> For with their vocal sounds they sing to pleasant May;
> Upon his dulcet pipe the *merle* doth only play."

And in a note upon this passage he adds: "Of all birds the *blackbird* only whistleth"; thus showing that the *ousel,* the *merle,* and the *blackbird* were all one. Bottom's *orange-tawny* bill accords with what Yarrell says of the blackbird: "The beak and the edges of the eyelids in the adult male are *gamboge yel-*

low." The *whistling* of the blackbird is thus spoken of in Spenser's *Epithalamion*:—

> "The merry Larke hir mattins sings aloft;
> The Thrush replyes; the Mavis descant playes;
> The *Ouzell shrills*; the Ruddock warbles soft."

174. *glow-worm's eyes*:—"I know not," says Johnson, "how Shakespeare, who commonly derived his knowledge of nature from his own observation, happened to place the glow-worm's light in his eyes, which is only in his tail." It is, however, remarked by Mason and Halliwell that the Poet may have intended to designate the lights of the insect as *eyes* without any reference to their situation.

186. *desire you of more acquaintance*:—This kind of phraseology was not uncommon. So in *The Merchant of Venice*, IV. i. 402: "I humbly do desire your *Grace of pardon.*" In *Lusty Juventus*, a Morality, we have: "I shall desire *you of* better acquaintance." And in *An Humorous Day's Mirth*, 1599: "I do desire *you of* more acquaintance."

Scene II.

97. *that costs the fresh blood dear*:—An allusion to the ancient notion that every sigh cost or consumed a drop of blood. Repeatedly found in Shakespeare, in various forms; as "blood-*consuming* sighs," "blood-*drinking* sighs," "blood-*sucking* sighs."

150. *join in souls*:—That is, join heartily, unite in the same mind.

198-208. *Is all the counsel*, etc.:—Gibbon, in his account of the holy friendship between the great Cappadocian saints, Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, *Decline and Fall*, Chap. xxvii., note 29, refers to this passage, and quotes a parallel passage from Gregory's Poem on his own Life. The historian adds: "Shakespeare had never read the poems of Gregory Nazianzen, he was ignorant of the Greek language; but his mother-tongue, the language of Nature, is the same in Cappadocia and in Britain." The following translation of St. Gregory's lines is given in Newman's *Church of the Fathers*:—

> "May I not boast how in our day we moved
> A truest pair, not without name in Greece;
> Had all things common, and one only soul

In lodgment of a double outward frame?
Our special bond, the thought of God above,
And the high longing after holy things.
And each of us was bold to trust in each,
Unto the emptying of our deepest hearts;
And then we loved the more, for sympathy
Pleaded in each, and knit the twain in one."

379. *night's swift dragons*:—The chariot of Night was fabled as drawn by a team of dragons, that is, serpents, who were thought to be always awake, because they slept with their eyes open, and therefore were selected for this purpose. So in *Cymbeline*, II. ii. 48: "Swift, swift, you *dragons* of the night." And in Milton's *Il Penseroso*:—

"Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
While Cynthia checks her *dragon* yoke."

382, 383. *damned spirits all*, etc.:—The ghosts of self-murderers, who were buried in crossroads; and of those who being drowned were condemned (according to the opinion of the ancients) to wander for a hundred years, as the rites of sepulture had never been regularly bestowed on their bodies. See the fine passage in *Hamlet*, I. i. 149 *et seq.* "I have heard, the cock, that is the trumpet to the morn," etc.

ACT FIFTH.

Scene I.

4 *seething brains*:—So in *The Tempest*, V. i. 59, 60: "Thy *brains*, now useless, *boil'd* within thy skull." And in *The Winter's Tale*, III. iii. 64, 65: "Would any but these *boiled brains* of nineteen and two-and-twenty hunt this weather?"

108-117. *If we offend*, etc.:—Had "this fellow" stood "upon points," his carefully mispointed speech would have read nearly as follows:—

"If we offend, it is with our good will
That you should think we come not to offend;
But with good will to show our simple skill:
That is the true beginning. Of our end

Consider then: we come; but in despite
We do not come: as minding to content you,
Our true intent is all for your delight.
We are not here, that you should here repent you.
The actors are at hand; and, by their show,
You shall know all that you are like to know."

166, 167. *It is the wittiest partition,* etc.:—Farmer would read "heard *in* discourse," making the equivoke on *partition* an allusion "to the many stupid *partitions* in the argumentative writings of the time"; and other commentators are disposed to follow Farmer in this explanation.

368 *et seq.* Upon this passage Coleridge thus remarks in his *Literary Remains*: "Very Anacreon in perfectness, proportion, grace, and spontaneity! So far it is Greek;—but then add, O, what wealth, what wild ranging, and yet what compression and condensation, of English fancy! In truth, there is nothing in Anacreon more perfect than these lines, or half so rich and imaginative. They form a speckless diamond."

387. *To sweep,* etc.:—That is, "to sweep the dust *from* behind the door." Collier informs us that on the title-page of the tract, *Robin Goodfellow, his Mad Pranks and Merry Jests,* Puck is represented in a woodcut with a broom over his shoulder. The whole fairy nation, for which he served as prime minister, were great sticklers for cleanliness.

401. *shall blessed be*:—This ceremony was in old times used at all marriages. Douce has given the formula from the Manual for the use of Salisbury. In the French romance of *Melusine,* the Bishop who marries her to Raymondin blesses the nuptial bed. The ceremony is there represented in a very ancient cut. The good prelate is sprinkling the parties with holy water. Sometimes, during the benediction, the married couple only *sat* on the bed; but they generally received a portion of the consecrated bread and wine.

414. *And each several chamber bless*:—Of this ancient rite Chaucer gives an example in The Milleres Tale:—

"Therwith the nightspel said he anon rightes,
On the foure halves of the hous aboute,
And on the threswold of the dore withoute.
Lord Jesu Crist, and seint Benedight,
Blisse this hous from every wicked wight," etc.

428. *Puck,* it seems, was a suspicious name, which makes that

this merry, mischievous gentleman does well to assert his honesty. As for the name itself, it was no better than *fiend* or *devil*. In *Piers Ploughman's Vision*, one personage is called *helle Pouke*. And the name thus occurs in Spenser's *Epithalamion*:—

> "Ne let *the pouke*, nor other evill sprights,
> Ne let mischievous witches with theyr charmes,
> Ne let hobgoblins, names whose sence we see not,
> Fray us with things that be not."

Questions on

A Midsummer-Night's Dream.

1. As to the time of its composition, with what group of comedies does this one belong?
2. What elements does it possess in common with these?
3. Where did Shakespeare derive suggestions for the play?
4. What are the speculations as to the occasion of the writing of this play?

ACT FIRST.

5. What celebration is approaching at the opening of the play?
6. How has Theseus wooed Hippolyta?
7. State the complaint against his daughter that Egeus brings to the Duke?
8. What penalty is threatened for the refusal of Hermia to obey her father?
9. Is there any particular differentiation in the characters of the two lovers?
10. Who is Helena, and what is the story of her love-affair?
11. What is the plan for flight of Hermia and Lysander? What does Helena propose in relation to it?
12. Has Sc. ii. been foreshadowed?
13. Mention the people here introduced and the characteristic attributes of each.
14. How has Shakespeare effected the removal of scene from the city?
15. Indicate the lines of action laid down in the first Act.

ACT SECOND.

16. Why were the fairies not introduced in the first Act?
17. How is Puck presented? Give the meaning of the epithet applied to him.
18. Explain his identity in English fairy lore.

19. Mention any lines to show how Shakespeare uses ideas of space and time in harmony with the diminutiveness of the fairies.

20. What is the cause of the quarrel between Oberon and Titania?

21. How does Shakespeare assign a supernatural origin to disturbances of nature?

22. How does he show the benevolent inclinations of the fairies?

23. Are these relationships of the natural and the supernatural to be regarded as indicating something of Shakespeare's philosophical creed, or to be interpreted, in the spirit of the play, as mere interesting fancies?

24. How does Oberon describe the fantasies with which he proposes to fill Titania's mind?

25. Though Puck blunders in his search for *the Athenian*, how does his mischievous nature exhibit itself in putting forth the charm on Lysander?

26. What is the dramatic function of the juice from the flower called *love-in-idleness*?

27. What complication is introduced at the end of the second Act?

ACT THIRD.

28. Describe the rehearsal of the play held by the mechanicals.

29. Do you see here anything satirical of the manner of stage representation in Shakespeare's time?

30. How does the dramatist enforce the value of imagination?

31. How has the transformation of Bottom been prepared for from the beginning of the play? Why is he the only one transformed?

32. What effect has this upon his companions? How does it affect himself?

33. How does Titania address Bottom when she awakens? What is the comic effect of her deception?

34. Compare, for comic effect, the directions Titania gives the attendants of Bottom with what Bottom himself says of the services he will ask of them.

35. How does Puck report Titania's awaking and infatuation?

36. Describe how the rival lovers desert Hermia and turn to Helena.

37. What view of the case does Helena take?

38. Explain the knot of complications as it is fully tied after the two lovers and the two ladies are introduced on the stage.

39. Show the difference between the origin of the misunderstandings in the men and in the women.

40. Compare this Scene with any scene of misunderstandings and cross-purposes in *The Comedy of Errors,* and tell wherein they differ.

41. How does Oberon direct Puck to manage the lovers so as to avert the quarrel?

42. Is the plot now brought to a climax? What will be the work of resolution?

ACT FOURTH.

43. Indicate what it is that makes the opening of the fourth Act, showing Bottom with the fairies, supremely comic.

44. What is Oberon's feeling at seeing Titania's infatuation, and how does he bring her infatuation to an end?

45. How is the resolution of the drama completely foretold? At what time do Theseus and Hippolyta enter the forest, and what is their errand there?

46. Is the spirit of this episode more English than Greek? Explain how.

47. What is the *rite of May*?

48. How does Demetrius effect the resolution of that part of the action concerning the lovers?

49. How does Theseus confirm and complete this resolution?

50. Describe Bottom's reflections on awaking.

51. Was Bottom overtaken with syncope? Show how Shakespeare has used some of the symptoms of this pathological case.

52. How does Sc. ii. advance the plot?

53. Is it a clever stroke of the asinine Bottom to assume that their play *is preferred*; or is there here an error of construction, since we hear in the fifth Act the discussion of Theseus and Philostrate over the program of plays and find them making a choice?

ACT FIFTH.

54. Explain the temper of the dialogue of Theseus and Hippolyta at the opening of the Act. What does it teach of their characters?

Questions

55. What, for instance, would Theseus have thought of Hamlet?

56. To what plays or poems do you find reference in the list of masques that Philostrate presents for Theseus's approval?

57. For what reason does Theseus select the play of the mechanicals? How does he justify this choice to Hippolyta?

58. What is the comic nature of the Prologue as Quince delivers it? How is he like the *great clerks* referred to by Theseus?

59. Define the kind of amusement that the Duke's company derive from the play of the mechanicals. Is it of the same nature as that felt by a spectator of Shakespeare's play?

60. What does Shakespeare say about plays in general and the spirit in which they should be viewed?

61. Contrast Hippolyta's intolerance of the play with the spirit shown by Theseus. Why does she ring the changes on Moon?

62. Describe the epilogue spoken by the fairies.

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63. Comment on three points of portrayal in this play—character, passion, dramatic movement.

64. What are the poetical qualities of the play?

65. Consider some details that make up the diversified world of the fairies, and comment on the burden laid upon the imagination in a stage representation.

66. What has Shakespeare himself supplied relative to a solution of this problem?

67. Compare and contrast Puck with Ariel. Which is the more lovable? Which the more interesting?

68. Summarize the traits that are possessed by Bottom. How is he a composite of parts of Dogberry and Malvolio?

69. Explain the mixture of national elements in this play. State some examples of anachronism. What national traits dominate the play?

70. Show the influence of this play upon the romantic revival at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century.